DEVELOPING A MODEL TO EXPLORE THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF MINISTERS AT PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

DEDICATION vi

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 3

1. MINISTRY FOCUS 3
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 10
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION 28
4. METHODOLOGY 56
5. FIELD EXPERIENCE 63
6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 84

APPENDIX 88

A. PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT 88

B. SESSION MODULES 90

C. POST PROJECT INTERVIEW FORM 102

D. FINAL PRESENTATIONS 104

E. PARTICIPANTS'CREEDAL STATEMENTS 110

F. ASSIGNED READINGS/CHARTS 118

G. THEOLOGY OF PREACHING 154

H. THEOLOGY OF PROPHETIC PREACHING 160

I. SERMONS 163

BIBLIOGRAPHY 181

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MODEL TO EXPLORE THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKOF MINISTERS AT PLEASANT GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

by

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This project was designed to explore the theological beliefs, values and assumptions of the ministers serving at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The researcher developed a ministry model that encouraged participants to evaluate their beliefs in light of Christian theological concepts and critically reflect upon the similarities and differences. The research methodology utilized included teachings, group discussions, assigned readings, journaling, questionnaires, presentations, and sermons. Research findings demonstrated that a heightened theological consciousness encourages critical reflection and promotes transformational learning. The researcher achieved the goal of evaluating the impact of theological reflection on the practice of ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the support of Bishop William Darryl Scott, the Senior Pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, who graciously allowed me to implement this project in the place where he has been assigned as under-shepherd. I am grateful for the opportunities given me to share my ministry gifts to assist in "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry." I am grateful to the participants in the project who willingly and openly shared their strengths and weaknesses for the sake of learning. A special thanks to my Doctoral mentors, Dr. McKissick and Dr. Carter, for their wisdom and experience which helped me to navigate the uncharted waters of this journey. It is with deep gratitude to acknowledge the members of my peer group who provided a push and a word of encouragement at just the right moments. There are simply no words to adequately convey the depth of my appreciation for my family for their support. To my husband Calvin, who through personal sacrifice and unlimited encouragement has shepherded me through this grand adventure, I love and appreciate you. To God be the Glory!

DEDICATION

To my husband and friend

Calvin D. Coleman

INTRODUCTION

This project was designed to develop a model to allow for the exploration of the theological beliefs, values and assumptions of ministers at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, VA. The intended audience was ministers not afforded an opportunity to be formally trained in Theology. The challenge was to expose the participants to traditional Christian theological concepts, to allow an examination of their embedded theological beliefs and allow for critical reflection of those beliefs.

A person's theological framework provides the support and structural integrity for the ministry work in which one engages. The health of the church is influenced by the work of the preacher and the preacher's work is influenced by his or her beliefs. Thus affording the preacher an opportunity to deepen their beliefs and convictions through study and reflection, has the potential to greatly impact the ministry work of the preacher and greatly influence the health of the church.

Chapter One discusses the benefit of this type of model for the local church in general and for Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in particular. The researcher discusses her ministry path and provides an analysis of the ministry context. This chapter also shares how the researcher and the context have converged at this time to provide an opportunity to explore this area of ministry.

Chapter Two offers a synopsis of the literature that was reviewed by the researcher to expand her knowledge base in order to aid in the planning and development of the ministry model. This chapter is a narrative analysis of issues concerning theological education, theological reflection and leadership formation. Literary reviews also include matters that were of particular interest to African American congregations

and the shifting relationships that exist between theological institutions and local congregations.

Chapter Three presents a historical, Biblical and theological foundation for this ministry model. The particular nuance of the training of clergy in the African American church is examined. Biblical foundations are researched from a survey of ministerial training in the Old Testament and from the perspective of Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament.

Chapter Four sets forth the research methodology used in the planning and implementation of this ministry model. Explanations for the chosen research design as well as the measurement and evaluation of the data are also presented.

Chapter Five offers a summary and the highlights of the data that was obtained during the implementation of this ministry model. A detailed listing of the participants' responses to pre and post surveys is included along with an explanation as to how that data was analyzed. Additionally, the outcome of the project data is discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Six, a discussion of the conclusions drawn as a result of the project is presented. The researcher identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the project and offers recommended areas for further study. The researcher also shares reflections and insights learned from the project.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MINISTRY FOCUS

"[If] you do not listen to Theology that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones— bad, muddled, out of date ideas."[1]—C. S. Lewis

"Doctrine is a wonderful servant and a horrible master."[2]—Rob Bell

The mention of the term "theology" among a group of Christian believers will bring forth a mixture of responses, some positive and others negative. Similarly to mention the term doctrine among a group of Christian believers may elicit similar reactions and bring to mind visions of denominational rifts, arguments and controversies. While those terms are not always received in a positive light, they should not mystify or confound believers.

Theology, simply defined is the study of God. It comes from two Greek words—*theos* meaning God and *logia* meaning knowledge or study—study of God. Every Christian believer by virtue of his or her relationship as a child of the Father has a way of "thinking" about or studying God. Persons may fail to recognize the inherent relationship

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New, York, NY: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1996), 136-137.

[2] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 25.

between this "way of thinking" and their corresponding behaviors. Furthermore an unexamined belief becomes static and when articulated has the potential to become a parroted phrase of the past rather than a dynamic living valued belief. Therefore, the study and discussion of theology and doctrine can help individuals "put words to realities beyond words."[3] While it is important for all believers to have an awareness of theology and doctrine, it is imperative for ministers to have a basic theological foundation, as they are accountable for clearly and accurately communicating the tenets of the Christian faith to others.

It should be noted that the acquiring of knowledge about theological matters and Christian doctrine should never be the intended outcome of study. Rob Bell asserts, "doctrine is a wonderful servant and a horrible master" and should never be studied for study sake.[4] The intended result of "thinking about or studying God" is to help persons to lead a holy and spiritually mature life: right action that comes from right information. Alister McGrath asserts that for anyone "interested in doing the right thing, it is necessary to have a set of values concerning human life. Those values are determined by beliefs and those beliefs are stated as doctrines. Christian doctrine thus provides a fundamental framework for Christian living."[5] Ministers not only attain a framework for living from theology but also establish a foundation for effective ministry practice.

Daniel Migliore describes theology as "faith seeking understanding" and believes that this "search for understanding" should be viewed as an "invitation of inquiry" into fully

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[3] Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 25.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2001), 36.

understanding one's faith and beliefs.[6] As Christian believers, we carry with us a collection of understandings and assumptions about God in the basket of our hearts and minds. Some beliefs have been gathered from our families of origin, others from our faith leaders and still many more from our culture and our individual life experiences. These types of beliefs can be referred to as our embedded theology. Exploring our assumptions about God and allowing critical reflection of our embedded theologies will aid us to better understand and articulate those assumptions. A careful look through a theological lens and a discussion of those beliefs with others can lead to a place of critical reflection and result in the act of transformative learning.

Today there are various options for training and development available to those who have been called into the gospel ministry. Choices range from congregational based schools of ministry to on-line bible classes to the traditional seminary training. While the earliest theological schools began with an emphasis on the pursuit of the spiritual, these school gradually developed into places where critical research and the acquiring of knowledge were the principle focus. The congregation-based schools may stress spiritual formation with a lesser emphasis placed upon theological concepts. This writer asserts that ministerial preparation must encompass both spiritual formation and correct doctrinal foundations while also focusing on the context of ministry.

In the context of the African American church, a professed "call" to ministry has traditionally signaled the ministry preparation season for clergy. This season of preparation is being completed through various formats. While some African American denominations consider the Master of Divinity degree a minimal requirement for service,

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[6] Daneile Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 2.

others view theological education as a hindrance to the spiritual well being of the minister. This writer asserts that the location of the training is not paramount. Regardless of location, the preparation for ministry should allow for an examination of one's embedded theology, help them to begin to critically reflect upon their beliefs and to develop a vocabulary to explain and share those beliefs.

The Ministry Context

This writer serves as an associate minister at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church located in suburban Virginia Beach, Virginia. The senior pastor has led the congregation since July of 1980. Pleasant Grove is a predominantly African American congregation that was founded in 1870 by a group of freed slaves who migrated from Prince George County, Virginia. The founding members were issued the deed to the original church site on March 28, 1888. The current pastor is the fifth pastor in the history of the church.

Pleasant Grove moved into its existing one-thousand seat structure in July of 1995. The former church site was less than a mile away and the previous building had become so crowded during worship services that parishioners would literally line the sidewalk with chairs in order to be a part of the worship experience. Consistent growth in the membership has been a hallmark of the church. Current membership exceeds three thousand with an average weekly attendance of eleven hundred persons per Sunday.

The neighboring community has undergone a tremendous growth in population over the last ten years with three major building developments currently underway. Homes adjacent to the church were built within the last three years with a beginning price of five hundred thousand dollars and priced beyond one million dollars. Land that once

served as home sites of member's families is now the site of condominium and townhouse developments that are adjacent to the church. Directly across from the church is the neighborhood of Alexandria where the homes range in price from two hundred fifty thousand to over four hundred thousand

The church has over thirty ministries serving the needs of the community and the congregants. The church is well known and respected in the community for its outreach activities which include an active benevolence program for members and non-members, providing volunteers for local homeless and feeding shelters, participating with Habitat for Humanity and contributing significant financial donations to local charitable organizations.

As the membership has increased a steady increase in the number of persons who have come to the church with a professed call to the ministry has increased as well. Throughout his tenure, the current pastor has fostered an environment where those who have sensed and acknowledged a call into the ministry are encouraged to learn and become equipped to fulfill their sense of calling. Currently twenty-seven associate ministers are privileged to serve alongside the pastor to assist in the providing for the spiritual needs of the congregation. Twenty-two of those ministers were licensed by Pleasant Grove Baptist Church with eleven becoming licensed within the last five years.

A formal Call to Ministry class was developed by the pastor in 2003 and it was mandated that any persons who had professed a call into the preaching and teaching ministry complete the classes in preparation for licensure. The curriculum for this class includes sessions such as understanding your call, sermon preparation, and pulpit etiquette. While theological concepts and awareness is inherent in the biblical studies

component of the classes, there has been no dedicated study of theology, doctrine or theological reflection.

On December 19, 1999, this writer became the first female to receive a license to preach the gospel at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. In August of 2000, this writer also became the first person hired in the newly created position of Church Business Administrator for the congregation. This status as "first" follows a long line of first throughout life such as first and only among family members to receive a B. S. degree, first among family of origin to relocate to another city, first African American executive hired by a one of the leading healthcare companies in the state of Virginia and the first and only among my family of origin to become a minister of the gospel. This writer has been characterized as a forerunner and resource person among varied constituents. The presence of the writer has also signaled the beginning of a transformation within organizations and thus she has learned to bridge the gap between traditional views and the emergent changes. God has also enabled the writer to minister effectively to various groups of people, crossing diverse cultural, educational and socioeconomic lines. She is respected among the congregation as a principled leader.

A renowned professor served as the writer's instructor in Homiletics while attending seminary at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. The class and the professor had a profound impact upon this writer. Beyond the lessons on preparing sermons and the importance of properly exegeting the text to be preached, the professor also taught of the importance of using our gifts and skills to help others. During a particular impactful lecture, he spoke of a group of former students who had consolidated their class notes to develop a curriculum that was used to conduct

preaching workshops in their local cities for ministers who were unable to attend seminary.

Following this class, this writer made a commitment to share the knowledge she had been privileged to acquire with others.

For over nine years this writer has been privileged to work alongside the senior pastor in the daily administration of the work of ministry at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. This afforded her the opportunity to be mentored and guided in varied areas of ministry. The writer's desire is to utilize skills learned in seminary along with the knowledge gained through the guidance of the pastor to share with others who may or may not have had the same opportunities.

The Synergy of Researcher and Context

This writer asserts that clergy and those preparing for ministry who have not been afforded a formal education in theology, would benefit from participation in a ministry model that introduces basic theological concepts and permits opportunity for exploration of currently held belief systems. The minister who has wrestled with the deep questions of life and is able to articulate the theology will be able to assist others in understanding, articulating and living out the mandates of Christ. Additionally, a task of theology is to provide preaching that is grounded in what one believes. Those beliefs should not be static but should continue to be shaped by life's experiences and the context in which one does ministry. Having been divinely directed to this congregation at this time the writer feels uniquely poised to use her gifts, skills and talents to assist the pastor and leaders in growing the people of God to be all that God has ordained.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One's theology is the way they have come to think about God. For purposes of this project, a theological framework is defined as the values, assumptions and beliefs that one holds about God that influence their action and behavior. Scholars have put forth scores of definitions for the term theology however the core idea is the study of God. Likewise, the importance and route for obtaining a theological education has gone through many forms throughout history. Debate still continues today over the most relevant location of that training, congregationally focused or academy centered. Scholars have debated over the content of the training and its intended outcome of transmitting facts, spiritual formation or preparation for the practical functions of ministry, such as the preparation of sermons and church administration.

The bible is replete with examples of ministry preparation as modeled by Moses and Joshua in the Old Testament to Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament. Matthews's account of the Sermon on the Mount offers a view of the teaching model of Jesus. Historically, the African American minister did not face these types of concerns regarding training as few options were available to the mass majority of those who had acknowledged a call into the ministry. Though not always educated, the black minister and others have succeeded in using their gifts and skills as well prophetic preaching to apply the Word of God to their unique contexts.

The classical definition of theology as lifted up by Daniel Migliore is "*fides quaren intellectum*, 'faith seeking understanding' (Anselem)" or "faith venturing to inquire and daring to raise questions."[1] Migliore asserts that to really live out the Christian faith one must live in a state of inquiry as we ponder the mysteries of God and allow our unique context to generate new questions for our faith that cannot be answered by history. He insists that "if we believe in God, we will have to become seekers . . . we will no longer be satisfied with unexamined beliefs and practices for our everyday personal and social world."[2] The writer enthusiastically embraced this statement as a foundational statement for the project and used this statement to reassure any perceived uneasiness by the participants in the project regarding the exploration of their core beliefs about God. This work was also instrumental in the researcher's decision to develop the modules around a systematic theology model. Migliore states,

> "... the effort of theology to be "systematic" is to be affirmed insofar as its concern is for the wholeness of faith as opposed to partial and one-sided understandings. Just as Christian faith is not a smorgasbord of beliefs, so Christian theology is not a disparate bundle of symbols and doctrine from which one can select at will or organize into any pattern one pleases. The cross of Jesus Christ cannot be understood apart from his life and his resurrection, nor can either of these be properly understood apart from the cross God's work of reconciliation cannot be rightly understood apart from the work of creation or the hope in the consummation of all things Christian doctrines form a coherent whole. There are deeply intertwined. They constitute a world. They tell a coherent story, Even expressions of faith that are laudably aimed to be "christocentric" would be seriously defective if , for example , they neglected the goodness of creation or minimized the reality of evil in the world or marginalized Christian hope in the kingdom of God. [3]

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[1] Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 25.

[2] Ibid., 4.

[3] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 11.

In Christian Theology: An Introduction, Alister McGrath offers the working definition of theology as a "reflection upon the God whom Christians worship and adore." He explains that the term has undergone many definition changes throughout the centuries but settles on Karl Rahners's definition of theology being the science of faith, "the conscious and methodical explanation and explication of the divine revelation received and grasped in faith."[4] His coverage of theological terms, sources and methods was utilized by the writer to prepare the teaching for module one of the project. Chapter five of this book offered an excellent refresher for the writer on the distinctions of systematic, historical, and pastoral theology and further contributed to the writer's decision to design the ministry model around a systematic theological format. The presentation of theology around a systematic format means to "organize on the basis of educational or presentation concerns or to present a clear and ordered overview of the main themes of the Christian faith, often following the pattern of the Apostles' Creed."[5]

Rob Bell, a Michigan pastor, defines theology as the belief one holds about God, Jesus, the Bible, salvation, the church and the future and stresses that those beliefs should be dynamic rather than static as one "wrestles" with what has been written in the past and actively examines and questions their beliefs.[6] His book, *Velvet Elvis* was useful in the design of the discussion questions used for the participants in the project.

Realizing that in many ecclesiastical circles, there is a disdain for and a bias against theological education and theological reflection, the researcher began this

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[4] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2001), 143-147.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 32.

endeavor with a driving question. What difference does one's theology make in the life of a minister or the minister in training – especially in the African American church? Initial research confirmed that throughout history and even in contemporary circles, the belief persists that a "divine call" and not ministerial training is the prime prerequisite for ministry. This researcher has heard the saying that clergy need not attend the "cemetery" in order to preach and minister to God's people. In the article, "Theological Education and the Task of Theology," Dean Martin highlights at least three reasons why ministers and ministers in training should be concerned with theological reflection. He states that theology has three primary tasks: grammar, preaching/teaching and evangelism.

Theology as grammar is concerned with the minister's task of "describing the already established faith of the Christian Church." Martin portrays theologians as mapmakers who have drawn out the "variegated terrain and the normal routes traveled by believers across the generations."[7] Ministers therefore must be skilled map readers and willing to discover where their life intersects on the map and be willing to identify "dead end" roads that are not relevant for their particular contexts.

An informed theological framework is necessary in the task of preaching and teaching so that the minister might communicate the truths of the gospel message while avoiding misunderstandings and the dissemination of erroneous beliefs. It is imperative that the minister know the theological heritage of their particular church or denomination and be aware that others have "mustered their stamina and used their wits in describing

[7] Dean Martin, "Theological Education and the Task of Theology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no 2, (Summer 2006): 227-240.

the concepts, thereby steering believers back onto the proper tracks of Christian discourse."[8]

> The trainee should come to know what can and cannot be said about God's will, about sin and grace, about the person of Jesus Christ, about faith and works, about new birth, and a wide array of other matters. Creeds, for instance, can provide an excellent springboard for the kind of reflection envisioned here. . . In such a theological exercise, some ways of speaking will be given up or modified because they are misleading, others because they are just muddled, still others because they are downright wrong (heresy). The aim here is not to be able to parade one's knowledge; the aim is to gain the ability to make the gospel message clear- because it is free of confusion- and true- because it is unmixed with error. One further and more longstanding result will be that the one who proclaims the good news will gain the skill to discern differences in concepts and to see the points of conceptual danger even without the tutelage of a professor. "[9]

Martin further adds that the goal of preaching and teaching should be "to the end that believers are brought to possess a faith that is fruitful and enduring" and that those who are not believers are prompted to "turn their lives upside down in response of faith in Christ" as a result of the gospel message. The task of theology is summarized as preaching, teaching and evangelizing.

The books *Frequently Asked Questions In Christian Theology* by William Harrison, Musser and Price's *A New Handbook of Christian Theology* and *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* by H. Wayne House were consulted and used to develop discussion topics for the modules as well as used for handouts to the participants.

The book entitled A *Primer of Christian Doctrine* by Jonathan R. Wilson was used by researcher in the development of the didactic for the first teaching module as well as to guide the group discussion in subsequent meeting dates. Wilson gives

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 231.

definitions and examples of basic terms of Christian theology in this "guidebook" for the study of systematic theology.[10]

Inasmuch as the aim of the project was to explore the participants' theological framework, it was imperative that the project focus on more than just the impartation of doctrinal facts but involve a critical reflection of their beliefs through a theological lens. Robert Kinast in his book, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection,* outlines the process of theological reflection in four steps. Step one is to describe an experience that one has had in ministry. Step two is described as entering the experience by reliving it and then move to step three which is to learn from the experience. Kinast emphasizes that theological reflection is not complete until a person "incorporates the learning into a pattern of living."[11] In other words, there is some change in behavior as a result of the learning. It is realized that the researcher's intentions for the project was not so much to evaluate the prior ministry experiences of the participants but rather to have them evaluate their beliefs against traditional Christian theological concepts to show the similarities and differences. The researcher had no desire to force a change in beliefs but rather desired that the participant would gain clarity and insight of concepts that would aid in articulation of and a deepening their beliefs.

Lisa Hess offers a model of theological reflection in her book, *Artisanal Theology* that she refers to as covenantal. She shares that theological reflection is best done in groups where a person's beliefs and attitudes are shared and then allowed to blend with

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[10] Jonathan R. Wilson, *A Primer for Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), xii.

[11] Robert Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection,* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), xi.

those of others and produce an integrated theology unique to the group and the context.[12] The researcher agrees with the approach of refining one's theology in the covenant of a group as the researcher can see the benefit of interactive dialogue in the process.

A review of the classic book *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* by James Fowler was a refresher to the researcher on the six stages of adult faith development. Stage three is entitled Synthetic-conventional. This stage is described as when one conforms to the majority thought of the authority figure. Many persons in the local congregation are in this stage. They are comfortable with what they have been taught to believe and are making life decisions based upon that knowledge. The fourth stage of faith development is the Individuative-reflective stage and when in this stage a person begins to critically analyze their beliefs and begin to shape their beliefs from that analysis.[13] It is the desire of the researcher that the ministry project will engage participants to move toward this stage in their faith development, if they have not already.

Much has been written about the state of learning in the modern day seminary. Daniel Aleshire, the executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has written a book entitled, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools.* This book provides a brief sketch of the history of theological education in the United States. Aleshire posits that the seminary is the best place for persons to be prepared for ministry while acknowledging that other models are needed as

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[12] Lisa Hess, *Artisanal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009).

[13] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1981), 54.

well. He states that the overwhelming goal of a theological curriculum should be a "theological understanding" which is an aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith." This writer concurs that the outcome of theological understanding should be a life that is lived in faith, however would argue that the understanding needed by persons preparing to be engaged in ministry can be obtained in contexts other than the traditional seminary.

According to a book edited by Barbara Hough and Joseph Wheeler entitled *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education*, there are at least four possible relationships that might exist between the local congregation and theological education. In this book, prominent scholars present essays centered on those four possibilities. The congregation might serve as a *paradigm* for theological education, serve as a b*eneficiary of* theological education, serve as *partners with* seminaries in the educational process or be treated as *a focus for study and subjects* of theological process. Arguments presented by the scholars demonstrated that exactly where along the continuum of education the academy and congregation belong will continue to be discussed.[14]

LeeAnn Snow describes the process that her seminary, American Baptist Seminary of the West undertook when it set out to reinvent their curriculum as the school transitioned from a being a historically white seminary to a predominantly African-American school. She stated that the school had taken a "'banking theory' approach to education where the emphasis had been on 'opening accounts' for students in various fields- New Testament, Old Testament, theology, history, pastoral care, etc, and then

[14] Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education,* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), x

filling each account with basic information." The focus had been on the downloading of information rather than seeking to be sure that the student "acquired critical learning skills."[15] This seminary restructured its curriculum to emphasize a bottom up approach to learning whereby the ministry context of the student became the focus. They reframed the curriculum with two basic concepts. The curriculum must be "radically contextual" and it would require "radical interdisciplinarity."[16] What emerged was a three year program whereby an integral part of the student's theological education was obtained on site in a teaching congregation. Students developed ministry projects that addressed problems that were defined in a particular context of ministry. This article demonstrated the significance of a relationship between the congregation and the academy and the importance of the context in the development of a curriculum for theological study.

Other theological institutions have made a concerted effort to integrate the academy and the minister's context in the theological educational process. One such effort is outlined in John Dart's article "Starting Pastor Off on the Right Foot." In his article, Dart describes a program funded by the Lilly Foundation that provided grants for recent protestant seminary graduates to be placed in a "residency" like pastoral role at sizable churches. The program began in 1999 and has found that the most positive experiences for the learning pastors was working with and learning from their peers. [17] Kirk Byron Jones has written an article entitled, "Reviving the Church-Seminary Partnership:

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[15] LeeAnn Snow, A Word About… From the Bottom Up: The Role of Contextualization in Theological Education," *Review & Expositor* 105, no.4 (Fall 2008): 560. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed November 1, 2009).

[16] Ibid., 563.

[17] John Dart, "Starting Pastors Off on the Right Foot", *The Christian Century,* (February 2009), 37.

Theological Education is Crucial for the Black Church's Future." Jones indicates that the priority of the church must be to "develop an ecclesiastical mind-set that connects spirituality and education." [18] He contends that for too long those in the black church have held onto a belief that a theological education would damage the preacher's innate abilities for ministry. He recommends that the church endorse what Gardner Taylor has called "learning and burning" and asserts that true spirituality is not embarrassed by the intellectual. He recommends that churches adopt a model whereby the local church sponsors theology students and host opportunities for them to engage in conversations and learned discussions. An article published in *The Christian Century* entitled, "Leaders for Black Churches" highlights various ways that seminaries and churches have formed those "learning and burning" partnerships. These church and seminary ventures are often found in the form of seminars and conferences such as those developed by the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and ITC in Atlanta. These seminars are held periodically and offer diverse course offerings from management issues to Biblical courses. This article also highlights the non-traditional hours Masters of Divinity program developed by Virginia Union University whereby students can obtain a M.Div. degree and still maintain full time employment. In this program the M.Div. can be obtained in the standard three year period by attending classes on evenings and weekends. Other schools have sought to meet the need for education clergy by developing Masters Level and Doctor of Ministry programs for ministers who do not hold an undergraduate degree. The African American Leadership Partnership Program developed by McCormick

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[18] Kirk Byron Jones, "Reviving the Church – Seminary Partnership: Theological Education is Crucial for the Black Church's Future," *The Christian Ministry 28*, (November-December 1997): 18.

Theological Seminary in Chicago targeted ministers who desired to enroll in seminary because they saw the need for better training even though they did not have a college degree.[19]

Virginia Union University along with the Baptist General Convention (BGC) of Virginia developed the Evans- Smith Leadership Training Institute to address the training needs of clergy in the state of Virginia. Classes are held in the evenings and on Saturdays in BGC member churches which are located in various places throughout the state of Virginia. The stated mission of this certificate program is:

> to partner with local congregations in cultivating leadership for various expressions of ministry. Recognizing that many church leaders lack formal theological education, STVU and BGC consider it a duty to offer quality educational opportunities that will assist all persons in fully developing their potential.[20]

While the academy and the church continue to move the training across various venues, the central concern is not the location of the training, but the content and the outcome. The classic book, *Between Athens and Berlin* by David Kelsey traces the history of theological education through its early history. The book stresses that the education of clergy has shifted over time from an emphasis of spiritual formation to a focus on the acquiring of a set of facts. This book which will be reviewed in the next chapter in a discussion of the historical foundations of theological education provided the foundational thrust for the project. It was important that the participants of the project not

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[19]Charitey Simmons, "Mentors and Managers: Leaders for Black Churches," *Christian Century*, (February 1995), 100-102.

[20] Evans-Smith Leadership Training Institute, A Certificate Program , The Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology Virginia Union University and The Baptist General Convention of Virginia., www.stvu.edu. (accessed June 9, 2009).

become focused on the gathering of theological facts but that the goal would be to foster an environment where persons could actively engage in "thinking theologically."

Stone and Dukes book, *How to Think Theologically* offered further insight on methods to employ to assist the participants in the process of theological reflection. Another aim of the project was to move the project participants past the parroting of church clichés in reference to their beliefs and aid them in the further development of a theological vocabulary. Stone and Duke state that, "to grow in faith is to deepen, extend, and perhaps revise our understanding of its meaning and to arrive at clearer means by which to *state and act* on our convictions."[21] The book offers exercises that can be used to help persons begin the process of examining their embedded theologies and move toward a more deliberative theology. A deliberative theology questions what had been taken for granted. It inspects a range of alternative understandings in search of that which is most satisfactory and seeks to formulate the meaning of faith as clearly and coherently as possible.[22]

The African American Church and Her Preacher

The researcher obtained a general overview of the history of the African American preacher from H. Beecher Hicks book, *Images of the Black Preacher*. In this book, Hicks speaks to the need for the formal ministerial training that is sensitive to the black church culture and black religious experience." [23]Again the researcher was

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[21] Howard Stone and James Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 2nd ed, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 21.

[22] Stone and Duke, 17.

[23] H. Beecher Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1997), 110.

reminded of the necessity of consideration of the particular ministry context in the process of theological reflection.

In his 1972 book, *The Black Preacher in America,* Charles Hamilton examines the role of the African American preacher from slavery to the twentieth century and concludes that there is no such thing as a "typical black preacher." Hamilton asserts that the black preacher has always been a cultural leader of his people and not just a political and religious leader and predicts that the black preacher will continue to be the most influential role model in the black community.

The researcher was excited to find the resource *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree* by William E. Montgomery. This book contained statistics and census data on the African American church in the south from 1865- 1900. A chapter on the education of clergy highlighted the historical notion that African American preachers are "called by God and not made by education."[24] This notion remains a factor in many African American churches today and thus the writer was sensitive to the use of terminology when selecting a title for the ministry model. The title "Exploring Theology" was abandoned in favor of "Let's Talk about God" as the classroom title for the project.

Dennis Willey picks up this theme of "calling versus education" in the African American church in his essay "The Meaning of the African American Church" in the book *What Does it Mean to be Black and Christian* edited by F. E. Harris. Willey asserts that one should always be mindful of the particularity of the context when preparing for theological reflection. He states that in the African American church there is "a

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[24] William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree,* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 315.

dichotomy between the spirit and the intellect with members desiring entertainment rather than engaging in genuine theological reflection."[25]

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya in the book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* present findings of a landmark study of seven major black denominations that was conducted over a ten year period whereby the authors conducted interviews with over eighteen hundred African American clergy persons. Their findings present an analysis of the black church replete with historical and contemporary data on the history and the trends of the black church. At the conclusion of the work they are able to cite one policy recommendation that will aid the black church in meeting the needs of its constituents in the age to come. They cite the "need for a more, better-trained, and better-educated black clergy" as the most critical issue facing the black church. Lincoln and Mamiya emphasize that a formal seminary education will not solve all the ills of the black church, but they posit that a better trained clergy will be more prepared to meet the diverse needs of her congregants. Lincoln and Mamiya affirm that the ideal black preacher should be "able to combine the best formal education with the best of the black religious tradition."[26]

Cain Hope Felder asserts in the article, "Re-Encountering, Absorbing, Reclaiming, and Transforming; A Distinctive Curricular Focus for Predominantly Black Divinity Schools and Seminaries" that while a seminary education is necessary, the vast majority of white theological institutions have produced African American preachers who

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[25] Dennis Willey, "The Meaning of the African American Church in *What Does it Mean to be Black and Christian* edited by Forest E. Harris, James Roberson and Larry Darnell George, (Nashville, TN: Townsend Press, 1988.

[26] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 399-340.

are well versed in European type of education but whose education has not prepared them to be of "benefit to the struggling black masses."[27] He contends that the predominantly black institutions have patterned themselves to replicate the curriculum of white seminaries and thereby have produced graduates who are "more priest to *the status quo* than the prophet railing against it for the sociopolitical transformation."[28] He contends that the first goal of a theological education should be to help the minister "re-encounter" God or to deepen and enrich in the students the "idea of the Holy." The overall objective of the education should be to reform the "character, integrity and spiritual values" of the students. Fielder's article supports the researcher's assertion that an increased awareness of God and the ability to view their individual and contextual experiences through a theological lens should be the intended outcome of study and not simply the acquiring of a set of theological particulars.

In the book *What Does It Mean to be Black and Christian*?, Delores Williams contends that the theological task of the African American church is to lead the church into a serious examination of the doctrines of its faith and how those doctrines support the quality of life of African American people. The researcher agrees with the author when she asserts that just as slaves learned to experience God differently than their oppressors, African American Christians of today must learn to experience God in light of the particularity of their context.

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[27] Cain Hope Felder, Re-Encountering, Absorbing, Reclaiming, and Transforming: A Distinctive Curricular Focus for Predominantly Black Divinity Schools and Seminaries," *Journal of Religious Thought* (2005): 122.

[28] Felder, 123.

Biblical Foundations

Hans Dieter Betz's *The Sermon on the Mount* offered insight into Jesus' teaching style as he set about to train and instruct the twelve disciples and helped to formulate a biblical foundation for this ministry model. D. Betz maintains that this sermon was a description of the rough road that the disciples must travel on their way through life if they want[ed] to reach their desired destiny."[29] The researcher also consulted Robert Guelich's commentary on this pivotal sermon also entitled, The *Sermon on the Mount*.[30] Both authors gave a complete critical analysis of Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. Additionally, George Strecker's book of the same title presented a comprehensive discussion of what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus and presented a thorough overview of the similarities and differences between Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain found in Luke's gospel.[31] Daniel Patte's book entitled *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith*, also proved valuable to the researcher for the analysis of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount.[32]

Preaching the Sermon on the Mount: The World it Imagines provided material to conduct a thorough narrative and historical analysis of the fifth chapter of the gospel of Matthew. Warren Carter shares in his essay, "Power and Identities: The Contexts of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount" that giving attention to the narrative and imperial –

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[29] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995).

[30] Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1982).

[31] Georg Strecker, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Publishers, 1988).

[32] Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith,* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987).

historical context can fully shape our understanding of the text. This book greatly aided the researcher in conducting an exegesis of this passage.[33]

Prophetic Preaching

The researcher's focus group was Prophetic Preaching in the African American Church in the Twenty-first Century. Assigned and supplemental readings aided the researcher in gaining a foundational understanding of prophetic ministry. The preacher who would be prophetic must do more than simply preach the word. In *African American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry,* author Carlyle F Stewart, III outlines four essential tenets of prophetic ministry. He asserts that to be prophetic, preachers must have passion for justice that goes beyond emotion, while exhibiting a conviction to live out the Word that is being proclaimed. He further asserts that the motivation for a prophetic ministry should be the well being of the people and thus the ministry should actively prepare people for the future that is envisioned.[34] This author reaffirmed the researcher's belief that preaching and especially prophetic preaching must be more than mere words, but words which become the impetus for action.

The prophetic preacher may at times be found at odds with the contemporary society. In *The Prophets*, Abraham Heschel posits that "the prophet was an individual who said no to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness and syncretism. He was often compelled to proclaim the very opposite of

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[33] Warren Carter, "Power and Identities: The Contexts of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount" in *Preaching the Sermon on the Mount*, edited by David Fleer and Dave Bland (St. Louis, MO, 2007), 9-21.

[34] Carlyle F. Stewart, III, *African American Church Growth: Twelve Principles for Prophetic Ministry,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 62.

what his heart expected."[35] This work contributed to the body of knowledge the writer obtained in the area of prophetic ministry.

[35] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2001).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Historical Foundations

The education and preparation of ministers has taken varied forms throughout history. From the first school of Christians, Catechetical School of Alexandria, Egypt established by Pantaenus in 185 A.D.[1], to the current modern graduate school of theology, the changes in type and format of training was often the result of a critical analysis of the existing model. The Greek or "Athens" model shifted to the German or "Berlin" model as the perceived needs of clergy education changed. Likewise, a distrust among many southern ministers of east coast seminaries led to the development of George Tennant's "log colleges" in southern states. The African American preacher was generally not privy to any sort of options for training. The African American minister received training in vastly different ways and manners. From the secret prayer meetings of the slaves in the "brush arbors" the black minister caught learning usually in context.

A school that would name among its leaders, Clement and Origin its early development in 185 A.D during the Patristic Period which encompassed the 1st through the 5th century beginning at the end of the apostolic age and ending at the beginning of

[1] Francis Joseph Bacchus. "Pantænus." *The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11.*, New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11446b.htm (accessed January 18, 2009).

the Dark Ages.[1] These schools are described as a mentorship type training where students essentially become a disciple of a particular teacher in order to learn their philosophy of ministry. It is to be noted that many ministers of this period did not attend this type of school, but rather received a traditional university education which was then used as the foundation for ministry. Notable among those were Augustine who attended a secular institution and received no formal training for the priesthood.[2] The Alexandrian education was focused on the spiritual formation of the student in addition to the attaining of knowledge.

This medieval period in history lasted from the 6th through the 11th century and is characterized by a time of moral and religious decay. Education of clergy during this phase was primarily taught by monks in the monasteries. Benedictine concentrated on the reading and copying of the scriptures and Constantinople became a center for theological education. At those universities, students concentrated on academics but they also were taught a "system of truths" which were gained through the reading of scripture and praying. By the end of this age, a change in ministry training had occurred whereby a greater emphasis was on scholastic achievement rather than character and spiritual formation.

During the reformation period, the university was understood to be a theological institution, both in terms of its place in society and the internal ordering of its subject matter. Leading theologians began to call for an increase in the education of priests. Luther was among many theologians calling for increase in the ministry education of the priest and addressed the issue by appointing pastoral supervisors to travel among the

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[1] James W. Fraser, *Schooling the Preachers: The Development of Protestant Theological Education in the United States*, 1740-1875, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1988), 149.

[2] Fraser, 152.

churches to provide education to the local priests. John Calvin established a school for ministry in June of 1559 in Geneva. Ministry training at this time had a strong emphasis on what David Kelsey describes as the "Athens" model.[3]

The Athens Model

Kelsey points out that "Athens" is the symbolic name for a type of schooling prevalent in ancient Greece in which "*paideia* is the heart of education. In Greek *paideia* meant a process of 'culturing' the soul or schooling as 'character formation.' It is the oldest picture of education to be found in Christianity."[4] *Paideia* was not concerned with learning a particular set of skills but rather was concerned with the *whole man.* The word *paideia* comes from the Greek word for encyclopedia and implies a completed system or circle. In other words to be educated in the Athens model or *Paideia* was to prepare a person for living not just for a vocation. There were four major aspects of *Paideia*:

> 1. The cultivation of the excellence or *arete* of the soul, consists not in acquiring a clutch of virtues but in knowledge of the Good itself. To be shaped by *arete* simply is to know the Good.
>
> 2. The Good is not only the underlying essence of the moral and intellectual virtues; it is the highest principle of the universe. It is the divine. Paideia was understood to be an education whose goal was in some way religious as well as moral.
>
> 3. The goal of paideia cannot be taught directly -- for example, by simply conveying information about various philosophers' doctrines regarding virtue. Knowledge of the Good only comes through contemplation, the ultimate fruit of which is an intuitive insight, a *gnosis* of the Good. Accordingly, all a teacher can provide a student is indirect assistance, intellectual and moral disciplines that will capacitate the student for the student's own moment of insight.

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[3] David Kelsey. *Between Athens and Berlin- The Theological Education Debate-* Religion online Electronic book – accessed Nov. 2, 2008 www. Religion-online.org.

[4] Kelsey, *Between Athens*, Chapter 1.

> 4. Insightful knowledge of the Good requires a conversion, a turning around of the soul from preoccupation with appearances to focus on reality, on the Good. This conversion results from a long educational process… and is inherently communal and not solitary.[5]

The Athens model stressed that this education could only be obtained through the workings of the Divine. The student would become a better overall person and a better citizen of society even as they grew in the knowledge of the Good and God.

The Athens model remained prevalent in Christianity. Gradually there was a desire for a clergy that was more skilled in particular ministry focus and there arose another model of clergy education known as the Berlin model.

The Berlin Model

In 1820, the University of Berlin was established and they made the controversial decision to include a faculty of theology driven by a desire for the clergy to be placed alongside other professions. The theological model engaged at the University of Berlin was espoused by German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher and was centered on *wissenschaft* or the orderly disciplined critical research method for the purpose of forming the minister as a professional .The Athens model had involved an inquiry of the sacred texts and those texts were always understood to be *authoritative* in regard to all matters, secular and sacred. Once the *wissenschaft* method was employed, it followed the methods of research universities whereby processes began with a requiring of justification of all alleged authorities or bases for truth."[6] The Berlin model said only that

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[5] Kelsey, *Between Athens,* Chapter 1.

[6] Kelsey, *Between Athens,* Chapter 2.

which had been inquired using the methods of *wissenschaft* can count as knowledge. It was stated that "neither ambiguity of an opinion, nor the esteem of persons who hold the opinion, nor the alleged divine inspiration alone justifies the acceptance of any opinion as an authority."[7] Thus the emphasis of theological education shifted from the impartation of spiritual truths to the discipline of critical research and the acquisition of knowledge.

Meanwhile in the Catholic Tradition, the Council of Trent which met from 1545-1563 marked the beginning of the modern Roman Catholic Church. There were numerous decrees that were raised in response to the Reformation but among them was the ordering of the founding of seminaries for the training of ministry. Until this time there had been no generally accepted regulations or educational requirements for the ordination of priests.[8] The priests had previously received an education in the Cathedral school wherein the "priest gathered around a bishop to receive training in dogma, liturgy, and common law."[9]

Theological education in American can be divided into three major segments: pre-seminary period, specialized scholarship and professional ministry.[10] While the education of ministry was initially based upon the model of *Paideia,* it gradually transformed into the Berlin model as emphasis was placed upon ministers having specific skills for designated tasks.

During the pre-seminary period, ministers were educated in the university. The

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Herbert Samworth, "*The Council of Trent*," Sola Scriptura, http://www.scriptorium.org/articles/historyofthebible/hotb_0010.html (accessed Sept. 20, 2008).

[9] Russell West, "Church Based Theological Education: When the Seminary Goes Back to Church," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2, no.2 (Fall 2003):115.

[10] Edward Farley, *Theologia,* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 176.

early presidents of Harvard University were members of the clergy and the main focus of the American universities became for them to be an "agency of learning for ministers for the churches."[11] Having gained their training from Europe, these college presidents were greatly influenced by European Protestantism. Education was viewed as vital to the development and maintenance of the hope for a Christian civilization and universities spoke of themselves as centers of the promotion of Christian civilization.

It was noted that while the clergy student completed studies at the universities, those studies did not adequately prepare them to perform specific functions in the local church. Therefore clergy would complete four years in the university and then serve as an apprentice to a senior level practicing clergyperson in a local church parsonage. Here they would continue to study books recommended by their tutoring pastor and observe the clergy in the performance of their pastoral duties. They would occasionally be given an opportunity to preach. The quality of the education received in these so named "schools of the prophets" depended entirely upon the quality of the tutor.[12]

Others who had a level of mistrust of the universities and the fears of the "danger of an unconverted ministry" decided to initiate their own models of training for ministers. Such was Gilbert Tennent, a revivalist who began the "log college" movement. "Log colleges" were established in mostly sparsely populated areas and generally trained through "reading divinity," a practice whereby ministers read assigned material and then applied the teachings at a local church. [13] Another training method was established by the

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[11] Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa, ed., *Religious Studies: Theological Studies and the University Divinity School*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 41.

[12] Kitagawa, *Religious Studies*, 56.

[13] James W. Fraser, *Schooling the Preachers: The Development of Protestant Theological Education in the United States, 1740-1875*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1988), 18.

Methodist in the form of Preacher Institutes. These training sessions generally lasted for one to two weeks where ministers would gather for discussion, read divinity, preach sermons, and receive mutual criticism and instruction by a seasoned, educated pastor.

The first freestanding seminary, Andover Theological Seminary, was established in 1808 and ushered in the era of "specialized scholarship" in theological education. It was during this phase that theological education made a markedly transition from the *paideia* model with an emphasis on character formation to the academic model of *wissenschaft*. The 4/3 model of a four year degree followed by three years of seminary is the Andover model as is the threefold curriculum in bible, theology and church history. The focus of the education now turned from spiritual formation to a focus on degree completion. An overemphasis on the academic and theological training devoid of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the minister was the criticism of the seminary experience.

During the era of "professional ministry" in education of clergy, there is a belief that ministry education should prepare the student for the specific task or activity that they will be engaged in the local parish or in some particular ministry. With this emphasis, the minister may gain knowledge of Christian education, pastoral care, sacred music or church administration but not gain scholarly expertise in theology.

In the African American community, the argument over the type of education for ministers was mostly absent. The black church had its origins in the secret prayer meetings of slaves held in the "brush arbors" away from the watchful eye of the white slave masters. H. Beecher Hicks asserts that it is these secret places that became the

"historical training ground" for the black preacher.[14] Here they practiced the texts that gave comfort and solace to a race of people daily engaged in oppressive and inhumane conditions of slavery.

Several formal African churches were established before the early 1800's. Many black ministers made petitions to be licensed to preach and were granted licenses by the Baptists, Methodists and Episcopal denominations in the south. [15] A slave preacher named Andrew Bryan established the first African congregation in Savannah, Georgia. The organization of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1794 by Richard Allen and the subsequent formation of the AME denomination in 1816 initiated the first independent black denominations and provided an opportunity for African Americans to freely express their own visions of Christianity.

While the black churches were very concerned about the lack of education among blacks in general, there was also a call for a "trained clergy." As far back as the Civil War, the AME Church had issued resolutions calling for and addressing the issue of ministerial education. [16] The sense in the African American church had been that the call to ministry was more important than educational pursuits. Hamilton quotes one black deacon saying, "I'm not against education, but education alone will not do the job. We must have a divine call."[17]

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[14] H. Beecher Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977), 29.

[15] Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21.

[16] Charles Hamilton, *The Black Preacher in America*, (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1972), 88.

[17] Hamilton, *The Black Preacher,* 92.

Wilberforce University was founded by the AME church in 1863 and is the first college owned and operated by blacks for blacks. In 1874 a school was established in Selma, Alabama for black preachers. In 1866 the AME church established the Florida Institutes; later named the Brown Theological Institutes was envisioned as a place to prepare black men for ministry.

Other schools established were Bishops Baptist College in Marshall, TX. By the 1890's the view among leaders in the AME church were that ministers who had heeded a "call" to the ministry must also be "prepared" for the ministry. Bishop T.M.D. Ward preached a sermon in St. Louis in 1880 emphasizing that an enlightened ministry, whose talents and calling have been consecrated to God, will make an intelligent, large hearted church. By 1916 Bishop Coppin of the AME church was calling for *an efficient ministry* described as a ministry that is prepared for the responsible task of leadership in the Church of God. Coppin further stressed that "it would be no less than a crime, not to say a sacrilege, for him who has the care of soul to be content to remain ignorant as it relates to the prevalent learning of the day."[18]

The American Baptist Home Missionary Society started the National Theological Institutes soon after the ending of the Civil War. Its primary focus was to provide education for ministers who were former slaves. One branch of this organization was located in Richmond, Virginia and later became the Richmond Seminary. This school located in the former capital of the Confederate States experienced great difficulty and was forced to hold classes in a former holding cell for slaves known as Lumpkins Jail. This school merged with the Washington, DC branch of the Institute and formed Virginia

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[18] Ibid.

Union University in 1899. The primary focus of the school was the education of the African American minister. [19]

The founding of these various schools should in no way be looked at as evidence that the majority of African American preachers in the latter 19th century were educated for ministry. In fact many boasted that they had "never had a day of real schooling."[20] The black preacher was content to have the compliments of the people that he both knew his bible and the he "sure could preach."[21]

Biblical Foundations

The scriptures present varying models for ministerial training and education. Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with examples of models that included extended on-the-job training, mentoring by an experienced and learned ministerial leader and training that occurred in the context of the ministry. The biblical model employed both formal and informal teaching methods and often involved a sending out of the protégé upon completion of the educational period.

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, examples of the apprenticeship model are plentiful. In this model the leader would take a novice who had demonstrated a definite call (whether discerned or appointed) and over a period of time model ministry with an expectation that

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[19] Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 8.

[20] Hamilton, *The Black Preacher,* 106.

[21] Ibid.

the mentor would observe and duplicate their actions and behaviors. This training was characterized as being praxis oriented, experiential and obedience oriented with a goal to create a leader who was faithful to the scripture and able to instill and inspire high ethical standards in others.[22] Oral communication was the dominant method used with a heavy emphasis on the memorization of Old Testament passages. Following the Hebrew model of education also required that "theory be wedded with practice rather than merely academic."[23]

Exodus 28:1-2, God selects Aaron as the first priest and subsequently appoints the sons of Aaron to follow "after him." (Ex. 29: 29, 1 Chronicles 23:13). The training of the sons of Aaron followed the traditional Hebrew model of familial education whereby the father would instruct his sons and the mother would instruct her daughters.[24] The Moses-Joshua model of ministerial education and training further shows training completed through a mentoring relationship and also shows the involvement of others in the congregation who assist the leader in the development of the mentee. In this instance, God instructed Moses to give Joshua *some* of his authority so that the members of the congregation would know that Joshua had been appointed as the mentee/ successor to Moses. God then appoints the priest Eleazar to give Joshua continuing directions from the Lord.

Before the conception of the prophet Samuel, his mother Hannah made an oath dedicating him to the service of the Lord. After the time that he was weaned, his mother

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[22] Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 34.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

and father took him to the priest Eli and left him at the home of the priest for him to be in service to God. Thus Samuel's training follows the model of a long term on–the-job-training as the boy grew up under the watchful eye of the priest and both observed, learned and practiced ministry under his tutelage. (2 Samuel 2:11, 3: 1-11)

The Old Testament also introduces us to a formal type of schooling known as the "school of the prophets." These schools were led by seasoned prophetic leaders who modeled ministry for a group of students. These schools are first introduced during the time of Samuel and are again mentioned during the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The schools were in varied locations, (i.e., Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal), varied greatly in the number of students and used permanent facilities for instruction.[25] It has been noted that the prophetic school was a type of artificial hereditary system in line with the Hebraic education model whereby the "sons of prophets" would learn from one Master prophet.[26]

These communal schools were developed to "associate together those whose souls were fitted to receive the Spirit of God for mutual improvement in the knowledge and fear of Jehovah, in order to raise up witnesses to the truth and combatants for the cause of the Lord and through these societies provide the godly."[27] The students shared common meals and carried on the traditions of the Master prophet. The students might be used to carry out ministry assignments such as when Elisha sent one of the sons to anoint Jehu as king over Israel. (2 Kings 9:1) or sent on errands to gather food for the common meal. (2

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[25] Simmons, *Mentors and Managers,* 115.

[26] Ibid.

[27] C. F. Keil and F. Delitzch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing), 498-501.

Kings 4:39) The prophet Elijah had many interactions with the school of prophets but his most noted student is the prophet Elisha. Elisha was nearly inseparable from his mentor Elijah and received on-the-job training as he observed and traveled with his mentor.

Overall ministry training/education in the Old Testament involved long term on the job training. Schools of prophets were used for the training of some ministerial leaders while others enjoined the learner/disciple model wherein the leader trained and the mentor observed, learned and imitated.

The New Testament

By the time of the New Testament and during the period of the early church, there was a well established method of education established in the Jewish community. Rabbis used systematic training techniques that involved memorizations of great amounts of text. Students would choose a rabbi to whom they would like to align themselves with and applied to study under his tutelage. Those students who excelled were maintained and passed on to a sort of middle school for additional instruction. The rabbi's techniques or method of interpretation of the Jewish Torah was known as the rabbi's yoke and the Jewish boy would make application to be a student under the "yoke" a particular rabbi.[28]

The method of training used in the New Testament followed a similar pattern of a mentor/mentee relationship model .The apostle Paul indicated that he had received his religious instruction at the feet of Gamalial, a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin, honored by all the people, who was a teacher of the law and who instructed Paul according to the strictness of the law (Acts 22:3). Paul, who received validation from the apostles and the

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[28] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 2005), 46.

Jewish leaders, sets out on a path to train and validate other leaders for ministry. It was Paul's expectation that his protégés would follow the doctrine that he taught and the behavior that they observed in his life and be able to teach others the same doctrine (2 Timothy 2: 10, 24-25). He does this by mentoring and sending forth Timothy, John Mark, Titus and others.

The gospels introduce us to yet another example of the mentor/mentee learning in the person of John the Baptist and his disciples. On one occasion Jesus disciples make a request for him to teach them as "John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

The ultimate example of the model for ministerial training and education comes from the biblical example of Jesus teaching the twelve disciples. The foundation for the ministry training begins with a call to the disciples. Persons begin preparation for ministry after they have discerned a call into the ministry. The first call of ministry is "to be with" Christ and then one is taught in preparation of being sent forth in ministry leadership.

It is only after a decision to follow, that the disciple received instruction. It was customary for students of rabbis at this time to follow the rabbi's wherever they went. There was a common expression to the rabbi's students to cover themselves with the dust of the rabbi's feet[29]. Just as the Jewish rabbi's issued a call to their students to come and follow them, so it was with Jesus' disciples. The Greek word used for disciples here is *manthano* from the root word *nanthano* meaning to learn. *A manthano* in the Greek is a pupil or a learner. The word implies more than a learner but it is one who accepts the

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[29] Bell, *Velvet Elvis,* 130.

instruction given to him and makes it his rule of conduct.[30]

> In the 31*manthánō* occurs only 25 times and is far less prominent than *didáskō.* We find it only three times in Matthew, once in Mark, two times in John, and none at all in Luke (once only in Acts). *mathētḗs*, of course, is a fundamental term, but *akoloutheín* rather than *manthánein* is the true mark of the *mathētḗs.* Jesus does not seek to impart information but to awaken commitment to himself. That this involves *manthánein*, too, may be seen in Mt. 11:29, but true *manthánein* means continuing in his word (Jn. 8:31).[32]

In Matthew's gospel, as Jesus begins his public ministry, a call is issued by Jesus to the first four of the disciples inviting them to "follow him" and become fishers of men. (Mt.4:18). This call is an invitation to a vocation of ministry and a turning away from "worldly concerns."[33] Matthew next offers a transitioning portion of text which announces the three tasks of Jesus' ministry. Matthew writes that Jesus is teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. The previous invitation to those who would follow is to join Jesus in these tasks of ministry. The fifth chapter of Matthew begins with an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:[34]

Using the oral tradition of the rabbis, Jesus began to teach the disciples. The Greek term used for teach in this passage is *didasko* which refers to the shaping of the will of the one taught. It denotes a concern with the whole man and his education in the deepest

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[30] Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 554.

[32]Ibid.

[33] Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 56.

[34]*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version.* 1989 (Mt 5:1-2). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

sense and not just with the retention of facts. In Rabbinic Judaism the history of the word implied instruction in the Law as the revealed will of God with an emphasis on the establishing and maintaining a proper relation between the individual and God on the one side, and the neighbor on the other according to the divine will.[35]

> *Didáskō* has inherent in it the intent to influence the understanding of the person who is taught. Its counterparts are *akoúō* (191), to hear for the purpose of understanding, and *manthánō* (3129), to learn, from which *mathētēs* (3101), learner, pupil, disciple, is derived. The one *didáskei*, teaches, and the other *mathēteúei* (3100), learns or assimilates what he learns as part of himself (Matt. 10:24, 25; Luke 6:40; 19:39). The thing aimed at when one teaches (*didáskō*) is the shaping of the will of the one taught by the communication of knowledge (Matt. 5:19; Acts 21:21; Col. 1:28). It is used in an absolute sense of Christ's teaching (Mark 9:31; 10:1; John 8:20; Col. 1:28), and as instruction in the Christian faith and teaching (Acts 11:26; Rom. 12:7; Col. 1:28; Heb. 5:12).[36]

The Sermon on the Mount has its origins in Judaism and the author of Matthew set out to write this passage for a Jewish audience. Hans Dieter Betz points out that because Matthew was directing the material at an audience that was from a Jewish background, the societal mores were taken into account in the way that the material was structured and presented.[37] Matthew describes Jesus as taking a seat to teach as this was the customary position of the Jewish teacher and would suggest an authoritative stance. Likewise, Matthew describes the setting of the teaching as "on a mountain" which would offer identification with Moses to the Matthew's Jewish audience.[38] Accordingly, the

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[35]*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* 1964-c1976. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (2:137). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

[36]Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G1321). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

[37] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 96.

[38] Patte, *The Gospel*, 61.

author's intent was to "formulate an epitome of the teachings of their revered teacher for the purpose of instructing those who had joined the Jesus movement, "the disciples." The Sermon encapsulates what Christian leaders regarded as vital for disciples to know.

While both Matthew and the similar gospel narrative found in Luke and known as the Sermon on the Plain are centered around teaching that the disciples need, Matthew places the Sermon at a point when only four disciples have been called: Peter, Andrew, James and John (Matthew 4: 18-22). While in Luke's version, the calling forth of all twelve disciples has already occurred.

There has been much written on the intended audience of the message. Suggestions are that Jesus was addressing this to disciples in the wider sense of all disciples (crowd) or in the narrow sense of the twelve. Dieter Betz concludes that although everyone heard the message, those appointed by Jesus to be his disciples are those to whom the message is addressed. (5: 13-16). Daniel Patte believes that Matthew assumed that the readers of his gospel would believe that the sermon was addressed to the small group of disciples or those called to religious vocation.

> Matthew does not deny his reader's view as he also thinks of it as being addressed to the small group of disciples. But by describing the crowd's actions in the same way as he describes the disciples he presents the *crowd as disciples* or possible p*otential disciples.*[39]

The Sermon on the Mount contains doctrinal teachings and implies just as the Old Testament model that proper knowledge will lead to proper actions. The first section is concerned with an understanding of the Torah. The second section deals with the proper Christian and church response to the knowledge found in the Torah while the third section deals with the way that this information should be played out in the socio-political

[39] Patte, 62.

economic climate of the particular context where it is read and taught.[40] Robert Guelich asserts that the Sermon offered the "classical expression of Christian ethics and a guide for Christian conduct."[41] He quotes Augustine as saying that the Sermon is "the perfect measure of Christian life filled with all the precepts by which the Christian life is formed.[42]

The passage commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount introduces us to the teaching style of Jesus Christ. When Jesus left the disciples to carry on the ministry work, the disciples were commanded to "go ye therefore and make disciple of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you…"(Matt 28: 28-29)

It is important to note that although the sermon was a teaching moment, it was indeed a "preached" moment. It is a sermon that was preached by Jesus for the purpose of instructing the disciples on principles of Christian living. It set forth doctrinal principles and laid the groundwork for theological thinking.

Conclusions

Training was initiated after a call or appointment.

The biblical model in both the Old and New Testament of ministerial training was one of training in context with a seasoned leader or mentor.

The acquiring of knowledge was important, but right action was the desired result.

Teaching included biblical, practical and doctrinal elements.

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[40] Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount,* 58.

[41] Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Waco, TX: Word Book Publisher, 1982), 21.

[42] Guelich, *The Sermon,* 21.

Theological Foundations

The minister in the local congregation is the person who has been assigned by God to be the transporter of the holy writ to God's people. After responding to a divine call, it is the responsibility of the preacher to become prepared for the work of the ministry. Preparation should be mandatory; however the shape and structure of that preparation may take various forms. While acquiring the skills to carry out the practices of ministry, the preacher should be engaged in both spiritual formation activities and learning the practical skills for the ministerial tasks but it is this writer's belief that the acquiring of a firm theological foundation should undergird the entire process of preparation.

There are various contemporary models of ministerial education in the twenty-first century, ranging from the traditional three year seminary to internet "schools" whose only location is a post office box and an internet website. The traditional seminary continues to provide a solid theological foundation, however there are many ministers who desire this type of education but who are not able to commit three years to attending seminary. A minister's inability to attend seminary does not lessen the need for the firm establishment of a theological foundation.

A recognized shortcoming of the seminary education is the primary focus on the acquiring of knowledge while neglecting spiritual formation and the development of practical skills. Some ministerial education models have attempted to address this perceived weakness but have often stressed the development of practical skills in ministry.

The significance of ministerial preparation in homiletics should not be minimized especially in the African American church where the ultimate affront to a minister would be to suggest that she/he "can't preach." Congregations tend to be forgiving of a lack of education, lack of personality and lack of tact, but the preacher must be capable of what Olin Moyd calls "tell[ing] the story." [43] A familiarity with the biblical text, instruction in sermon preparation are both essential however a firm theological foundation guards against preaching messages that are doctrinally shaky and potentially injurious to the people of God.

It is this writer's belief that a theological education should be integrated with practical skills and bible proficiency all the while connected to the local church. Kevin Ellington states that there is seems to be a "disconnect between the demands of the profession and the institutions preparing individuals for the profession."[44] The uniqueness of the context where the preacher will engage in ministry must be considered a vital part of the educational process. Ellington further asserts that the objectives of the instruction should reflect the location of the instruction.[45]

African American congregations are diverse in their worship and theological perspectives, however, they share a common history birthed out of a desire to worship in freedom and dignity. Daphne Wiggins asserts that the common history of the black church also leads them to "share a commitment to a socially relevant gospel that meets

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[43] Olin Moyd, *God's Yes Was Louder Than My No: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition,* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995).

[44] Kevin Ellington, *Strategic Church/Seminary Partnerships; A Emerging Paradigm of Contextually Based Theological Education, A Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the school of Divinity in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Ministry*, Regent University, Virginia Beach, 2004.

[45] Ibid, 44.

the material and spiritual needs of its members."[46] She makes the point that due to this commonality the African American church is an essential context for ministerial education.

> Slaves became black Americans, who created the Black church spiritually, theologically and idealistically independent of any previous cultural commitment and transcending the circumstances which called it into existence. . . . It is a religious institution with its own raison d'être. The black church exists because African Americans desire it to. It began as an act of self –determination, influenced by the negative forces of racism and the positive force of a theological mandate to respond holistically to the needs of the community. Its history and ministry manifests the dialectical tensions between society and religion. People whose religious lives are shaped by a common history of oppression and experience have common questions.[47]

This further emphasizes the importance of a theological education conducted at the local church level and the importance of exposure of the ministerial student to the various ways that the faith experience can be viewed theologically.

James Cone, a leading 20th century theologian and the originator of the theory of black theology, asserts that Jesus has always been on the side of the oppressed. He likens the emancipation from slavery in America to the deliverance from Egyptian bondage of the Hebrew people. This then becomes that Jesus is on the side of the oppressed and actively identifies with and becomes "black" in order to bring relief to those who find themselves in socio-political and economic bondage in America as a consequence of their ontological blackness. Black theology is one way that ministers in the black church can understand their faith experience and can undergird their ministry functions as one who

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[46] Daphne Wiggins, "Making a Way out of No Way", in *Teaching African American Religions*, ed. Carolyn Jones (Oxford, 2005), 141.

[47] Wiggins, *Teaching African,* 141-142.

works to speak to and address the unique "questions" of a people with a shared history of oppression and a present reality of inequality.

Latin American theologians in the 20th century developed the theory of liberation theology. This theology shares the idea that Jesus is on the side of the oppressed, but does not limit the identification of these ontologically, but rather economically and politically. It is the contention of Justo Gutierrez and other liberation theologians that Jesus works on behalf of those who are in bondage at the hands of the oppressors and is actively seeking to liberate.

Theologian Karl Barth indicated that preachers should always be aware of the situations within the context when preaching. He was a proponent that the minister should preach with "the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other."[48] For the minister in the African American context, this would mean that one must take into account the contextual concerns in the preaching moment and in the development of their individual theology. One way that this can be expressed is through the use of prophetic preaching, or preaching that is designed to effect change or transformation. Prophetic preaching can appropriate the tenets of liberation theology as it speaks to the conditions of the oppressed and the "least of these" in society and in the local church.

Upon entering the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus stood to read the sacred text saying that "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor… to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Using the scripture taken from the 61st chapter of Isaiah as a backdrop, Jesus

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[48] Handout, lecture, United Theological Seminary, August 20. 2008.

began to boldly announce that His mission and reason for being on earth was all contained in that text. He was proclaiming that the mission of his ministry was to speak to the needs of the world, not just from a physical and spiritually perspective, but he came to address their economic, social and political well being as well.

As followers of Christ, we have enjoined ourselves to this enduring mission to attend to the needs of those in the society who are the disenfranchised, poor, in bondage and bruised. Disciples of Christ should take up the prophetic mantle that accompanies their Christian status and seek to alter the existing world structure. A prophetic ministry is one that courageously accepts the mandate of Luke 4: 18-19 and be willing to go forth and preach and proclaim justice for those who have no voice of their own. The intended outcome of the prophetic ministry is not just the announcement of the ills of the society but a "righting" of societal "wrongs." The Lucan four passage ends with an announcement of the inauguration of the "acceptable year of the Lord" that eludes to the beginning of the Year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year when everything in Israel was restored to its proper place (Lev.25:8). As followers of Christ, we likewise have received a commission, to carry on the work of Christ on earth until He returns. This means that we are under mandate to put on the prophetic mantle and fulfill our prophetic element of our commission.

Jesus came to earth preaching the message that he had come to establish the Kingdom of God. His proclamation was to preach with a prophetic stance. Upon leaving the earth, he commissioned his disciples of yesterday, today and tomorrow to continue the work that He had begun. Ministers of the gospel are under a mandate to fulfill the role of Jesus, priestly, kingly and prophetically. Preaching in general is to apply the divine

love of God to the pressing needs of people. Prophetic preaching carries the same mandate but takes on the added dimension of challenging the political and social injustices of the contemporary society with the application of divine love. To preach prophetically is to preach under the authority of the Holy Spirit whose anointing or enabling ability provides revelatory meaning to the current issues and aids the preacher in advocating appropriate action to handle those concerns.

Who are the prophetic?

All those who have accepted the mandate of prophetic mantle of Christ as outlined in Luke 4: 18-19 are those who have accepted the responsibility of prophesying deliverance to the oppressed. It is important to note, that this is not the popular prophet that we see in a lot of contemporary churches today, who are mostly concerned with forth telling and promises of personal prosperity and success of the individual. This prophet speaks to and is concerned with the state of the world while standing outside of the status quo and willing to suffer for the words that they proclaim. The prophet is the one, who is willing to stand up for those who are crippled, speak for those who are mute and provide vision for those who are blind.

The word prophet comes from the Greek word "nabi" which means a voice speaking for God. Being a prophetic preacher means more than to foretell or forth tell, but rather it means being a mouthpiece for God to the world. Deuteronomy 18: 14 –18 says, "The Lord will raise up a prophet like me. I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him." T. Austin Sparks in *Prophetic Ministry* says

that the prophetic is more than the predictive element and stands as the ministry of spiritual interpretation. The prophetic preacher must bring the God element to bear on every concern.[49]

What is Prophetic?

Prophetic preaching must go beyond simply issuing a diagnosis of societal ills and go further and propose the action that will bring reconciliation between the actual state and God's intended. Micah 6:8 says "…do justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." Justice is not just to be dreamed or spoken, but justice is to be done. To do justice is a call for action. Prophetic preaching likewise is a call to action not a commentary on intended action. It is to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. While the prophetic preachment will challenge societal norms, it is important that the proclamation not be pronounced simply for shock value, but its aim should be to make one uncomfortable remaining in the same state after hearing new information. It has been said that ignorance is bliss. The prophetic preachment seeks to remove the ignorance excuse and encourage persons to take action in light of the information that they have obtained. Phillip Wogaman in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World* asserts that prophetic preaching should expose the hearer to the conflict between their faith and practice."[50] In *Unleashing the Word* by Adam Hamilton, it is stated that prophetic preaching should do more than make a position known; it should be influential in having people alter their views when they realize that they are in conflict with the

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[49] T. Austin Sparks, *Prophetic Ministry*, (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publisher, 2000), 38.

[50] Philip J. Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World,* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Publishers, Inc., 1945), 52.

scriptures.[51]

An essential element of prophetic preaching is the preacher's ability to not just hear from God, and "unleash the Word" but the preacher must be able to exegete the text and also exegete the context. It has been said that when the text meets the context, that is when one will be prophetic.[52] The preacher must be able to identify the injustices in the present society. Renita Weems states:

> How can we preach for years and never bring up domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the kidnapping of girls that take place every week in our cities? What will it say about us if we mastered the art of preaching, but never figured out a way to persuade audiences to see God as more than Father? If we insist upon our right to preach, only to preach a gospel of prosperity and say nothing about war and systemic poverty, what was the point? If God is as terrifying and punitive in our preaching as God has been construed by previous generations of preachers, if men are not offered new models of manhood and women are not offered new, life-giving ways of being whole and holy vessels of God, if hierarchy and patriarchy continue to define the way the church does business, then what difference will it have made …in the 21st century?[53]

The prophetic preacher must properly diagnose the ills of society and not ignore the symptoms of an illness that threatens the very existence of those whom Jesus came to set free. Brad Braxton has stated that the prophetic preacher must have an "unflinching commitment to 'righteous troublemaking.'"[54] The preacher must be willing to bear the heat that will come as a result of the truth that they proclaim. Friction is produced when the powerful is confronted with a truth that is antithetical to its existence.

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[51] Adam Hamilton, *Unleashing the Word: Preaching with Relevance, Purpose and Passion*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 6.

[52] Lecture at United Theological Seminary, D.Min. Intensive by Dr. Kendall McCabe, August 2008.

[53] Renita Weems, "Something Within", www.somethingwithin.com/blog, posting date, 9/20/2007, accessed 9/27/2008.

[54] Brad Braxton, "Prophetic Preaching," *The African American Pulpit*, Volume 11, Number 4, Fall (2008): 9.

Prophetic Preaching and the African American Church

The African American church was birthed out of a desire to worship God in freedom. When Rev. Absalom Jones was pulled from his knees while in prayer at the altar of St. Georges Church in Philadelphia, he along with Rev. Richard Allen and other African Americans knew that the time had come for them to establish a church where blacks could worship freely. Theirs was not a desire to be separate or to exclude anyone, but rather a hope for an opportunity to worship God in dignity.[55]

During the antebellum period (1820-1860) Christianity continued to grow among the slave population. Slaves when permitted attended church along with whites and most often were seated in back pews or galleries. The African American had been consistent in their worship. Historians have called the slaves' religion as 'invisible institution. In these mostly secret meetings sometimes held in the midst of brush arbors were called secret because they were hidden from the sight of the slave masters. At these meeting the slave preacher could be authentic and not just preach the mandated message of "slaves obey your master."

The slave preacher shared in the oppressive condition of slavery just as the congregants, but God used the preacher to speak to these conditions in ways that brought comfort and a momentary relief to shared burdens. H. Beecher Hicks states in every society God had a prophet that was uniquely fitted for that particular situation. Moses was properly suited to speak to Pharaoh, Amos was the right person to bring the Word of God to Jeroboam and the slave preacher was the prophet in residence during the

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[55] Milton Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness,* 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 146.

antebellum period.[56] Hicks states that the priorities of the black preacher during slavery remain constant today: 1. Speak to a particular situation and interpret life's meanings to those when called to shepherd and serve in light of their condition of existence 2. Be the watchman on the wall who looks out into the distance and alerts and 3. Speak to black community a word of warning and if necessary judgment.[57]

Decades after slavery ended, black ministers continued to find words to encourage the black Christian in the face of bleak situations. From slavery through the civil rights, the black preacher was a steady voice in the life of the African American church. The voice constant during the civil rights era in the 1950's and 1960's, the black preacher maintained their prophetic mantle to continue to speak hope in the midst of turbulent times. In the 21st century, the prophetic voice must continue to ring aloud in the black church. The voice must remember that it carries the mandate of Jesus to "preach good tidings to the poor . . . to proclaim liberty"! The voice in the black church that was birthed in slavery and nurtured throughout the last century must continue to speak hope and encouragement.

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[56] H. Beecher Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977), 116.

[57] Ibid., 122.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The purpose of this qualitative action research project was to document a model to explore and stimulate the theological framework of ministers. One's theological framework is their beliefs, values and attitudes[1] about God and provides structural support for their ministry practice. While it is essential for all Christian believers to possess an awareness of what they believe about God, this researcher asserts that it is essential for ministers to know and accurately communicate those beliefs while in service to others. The project also aimed to evaluate how participants express their embedded theological beliefs and to offer tools to aid in the development of a theological vocabulary. It is the aim that at the end of this action research project, the participants in this project will have explored their individual beliefs and related them to basic Christian theological foundations. It is also desired that participants will see the value of bringing theology into their reflective thinking, begin to integrate those concepts into their practice of ministry and be aroused to consider further theological study.

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[1]Framework. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language,* 4th. ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/framework (accessed: September 09, 2009).

Intervention (Description of Ministry Model)

After obtaining approval from the Senior Pastor to conduct the project on site at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church (PGBC), an invitation was made via email to all licentiate ministers and current ministers in training. The invitation letter explained the nature of the project, the intended audience and the commitment of time that would be involved (Appendix B). Staff ministers who had completed theological studies or who were currently pursuing theological studies were invited to participate in the project as context associates to aid in the development of questionnaires and to assist with the process of collecting, coding and analyzing the data to be produced. The Senior Pastor informed the congregation via a Pastoral announcement during several worship services of the commencement of the project and in essence offered his approval for persons to participate in the project if they so desired.

Persons were invited to inquire via email, telephone or at the church with any questions. The invitation offered limited information so as to invite inquiry and allow the researcher an opportunity to screen the potential participants. An inquiry was received from seven potential participants who were each subsequently invited to participate in the project.

At the first class session, four or the invited persons were in attendance. A fifth participant indicated that she would be out of town for the first class session and requested and was granted permission to begin attending at the second class session. Approval was granted with the condition that assigned readings and the written assignments be submitted at the beginning of the second class session. Three non seminary trained ministers in training and one seminary trained minister were present.

Inquiry was made to the invited persons that were not present and they declined to participate in the project.

On the week following the second class session, an inquiry was received from another potential participant who indicated that she would like to attend the session and asked if she could come to the next class. She was marginally participatory and did not attend any other sessions. She indicted that other commitments would not allow her participate in the project. Also on the third session, one additional minister in training requested to attend and was granted permission on condition that she completed all written assignments. Participant came to the session but had not completed assigned readings or assigned papers. The researcher and participant agreed that she should not continue with the project.

At the completion of the third session, Participant Five informed the researcher that she would be having surgery and would not be able to continue participating in the sessions. She disclosed that her desire was that God would heal her miraculously so that she would not have need for the surgery and subsequently be able to continue to attend the project sessions.

Candidates for participants in this project were purposefully selected based upon several requirements. First, they were required to either be a licensed minister or in preparation for licensure and be able to articulate their calling into the ministry. Second, they had not obtained a seminary education. Third, they were willing to commit to attending the class sessions and complete the assignments.

Participant One worked in the area of Customer Service until becoming unemployed recently. She lists her occupation as "Servant of God." She is married with

two children, one of whom is a married adult. She attended the Pastoral Call to Ministry classes and is awaiting a scheduled date for ministerial licensure. She currently serves as a teacher in the Children's Church and is an assistant leader in the Intercessory Prayer Ministry.

Participant Two is a forty- something year old African American female who has been a member of PGBC for thirteen years. She has attended several classes at a local Bible college and recently registered to attend a distance learning course at Birmingham Theological Seminary. She has attended the Pastoral Call to Ministry classes and is awaiting a date for ministerial licensure. She serves with the Missionary ministry, noon day prayer ministry and sings in the church choir.

Participant Three is a forty-something year old female who has been a member of Pleasant Grove Baptist church for ten years. She is the mother of three children ranging in age from sixteen to twenty years of age. She is employed as an "Instructional Systems Designer and has an earned Bachelor's Degree. She has participated in the Pastoral Call to Ministry class. She has no formal theological training but has attended various classes and seminars including a two year evangelism course offered by PGBC.

Participant Four is a fifty-one year old African American female who graduated in 2008 from the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology with a Masters of Divinity degree. Participant Five attended the classes and participated in the group discussions where she helped the researcher guide the discussion and assisted in note-taking. She is employed as a Physical Education Instructor at a local high school.

Participant Five is a sixty something African American female who recently retired after a thirty year career with the Federal government. She is currently employed

as a Prayer Service Representative with a local Television ministry. Her education includes a high school diploma, and attendance in Business college and some Bible school classes. She currently serves with the missionary ministry at PGBC.

Participant Six is thirty-eight years old and a single mother. She has been a member of PGBC for nine years and was licensed to preach over four years ago. She indicated that she wanted to attend the sessions to "see what it was about." She attended one session and then indicated that she had other commitments that would not allow her to continue to attend the sessions.

Research Design

This action research project was designed to offer an environment where the participant could critically reflect, discuss and move towards an informed theological framework. Participants were asked to bring to the first session a written copy of their "Call to Ministry" experience and during the first session they completed a "Basic Information" form used to gather demographic information and completed a questionnaire to capture their current understanding and awareness of theological concepts.

The first session began with a "centering moment" whereby the researcher utilized a scripture reading and made comments relative to the overall knowledge of God. The researcher provided handouts to the participants on major contemporary theologies and definitions of pertinent terms and led a discussion of the same. Participant expectations were discussed and included:

1. Centering moments- class session began with a centering moment which utilized the "theological topic of the day" as the focal point. The researcher led the first centering moments and then the participants led subsequent sessions.

2. Weekly journal entries were required to record theological observations and reflections noted throughout the week. Presentations from the journal were encouraged following the centering moment.

3. Assigned readings on the theological topic for each week and a one page reaction paper on each topic.

4. Group discussions were centered on the topic of the day and were designed to probe embedded theology of the participants.

5. Participant Presentations- During the last class session participants made a presentation on an area of theology and how the concept could be integrated into a ministry area.

6. Post survey questionnaire and post survey interview- Conducted at the end of the project.

7. Development of Participant Creedal Statements- To be completed no later than two weeks following the project completion.

Assessment

The outcome of the project was assessed via personal interviews with the participants, post assessment questionnaires, analysis of journal entries, and the evaluation of participant presentations. Interviews were conducted with each participant at the conclusion of the study. The instrument captured a qualitative measure of the impact of the project by recording personal testimony and feedback that was experiential in nature.

The review of assigned writings (reaction papers) was used to demonstrate ability to critically reflect. An analysis of the weekly journal entries assessed any evidence of a heightened sense of theological awareness. The Post project questionnaire was used to

see if language and terms used after the session were different or if descriptors remained stable. The post- interview with each participant was used to determine if the project information had been integrated into the participant's ministry practice. The participant was also asked to evaluate the project format and asked to provide feedback for improvement to the ministry model.

Instrumentation

The instruments chosen for this qualitative action research project were interviews, questionnaires, group discussions, assigned readings, weekly journaling by participants, participant presentations and the development of creedal statements. Context associates were utilized to analyze and assist with the coding of data.

The interviews were designed as structured interviews to guide the interview process while not limiting the participants' response. Questionnaires were designed with open-ended questions to allow freedom of expression of the various theological concepts. Group discussions were allowed to observe participants ability to critically reflect and incorporate learning into their interactive dialogue. Self- directed learning was the aim of the weekly assigned readings and reaction paper. The final presentation was utilized to measure transformational learning and the integration of concepts into the practice of ministry. Context associates assisted with the review and analysis of data to ensure that proper coding was conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Collection of Data

On the first session, six participants met in a classroom in the educational wing of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. The researcher provided a continental breakfast and participants were invited to mingle for approximately ten minutes. At 9:10 am the researcher opened the session with a welcome to all participants. Each participant received a course syllabus and the researcher provided an overview of the upcoming sessions as well as an explanation of the commitment required of the participants. Information was provided on the completion of reaction papers to assigned readings and the recording of theological observations in a weekly journal entry.

Each of the participants in the project are known to each other as all are members of the ministerial staff or involved in the "Call to Ministry" classes. The participants had been asked to bring a written account of their "Call to Ministry" experience. The researcher shared her "Call to Ministry" experience and then each participant was given an opportunity to verbally share their call story. Several participants remarked on the particularity of the experiences shared and Participant Two commented that she highly valued the opportunity to review and reflect upon her call experience.

The Pre-Project Assessment Questionnaire was administered to the participants and was used to evaluate current understanding and articulation of theological concepts (Appendix A). The researcher facilitated a forty-five minute didactic that was designed to introduce major contemporary theologies and the definition of relevant terms (Appendix B). A Question and Answer session followed as the didactic generated additional questions from the participants. Handouts were distributed to the participants for the week's assigned readings. Assigned reading topics were the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Trinity. An additional handout was given listing the various names of God found in scripture. Instructions were given for the reactions paper and the weekly journal entry. Participants were given notebooks to record their journal entries. The session was closed in prayer by Participant Two.

The second class session was opened with a devotional period led by the researcher. A reading from the book, *The Shack* by William Young was chosen that depicts God the Father as a large middle aged black woman. Jesus is presented in the book as the "guy next door" who wears jeans and enjoys fishing and working with his hands while the Holy Spirit is a young female "hippie" personality who appears mystically. The researcher used this reading to launch into a discussion on the participants view of God. Each person was asked to share his or her favorite "nickname" or title for God and offer reasoning for the choice. Responses included "Daddy", "I AM", and "The Mighty One." The researcher led the group in discussion of the following: 1. Who is the God in whom you believe? 2. How do you know that God exists? 3. Think about the attributes of God? What has been your experience with those that came to mind? 4. What is meant by the term Trinity? Additional questions were generated on the

doctrine of the Trinity with participants sharing various ways to explain this concept. Explanations included using the terms fire, heat and light to express God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit respectively. Water, ice and steam were other examples given of terms to use to express the concept of the Trinity. Participants were asked to include additional comments concerning this concept in their journal writing for the upcoming week. Handouts were distributed and the session closed in prayer.

The third session began with a devotion led by Participant One centered on the topic of the day, the person and work of Jesus Christ. As participants were transitioning to the discussion period, Participant One shared with the class that she had obtained a book from the Minister of Education on the subject of the Trinity, entitled *3 In 1: A Picture of God* by Joanne Marxhausen which helped her to better understand the concept of the Trinity. She further commented that she had been so enlightened by the previous session discussion on the topic that she sought out additional information. The researcher acknowledged the enthusiasm of the group and after all additional questions were addressed, transitioned the discussion to the topic of the day, the person and work of Jesus Christ. Participants were asked to share any reactions to their assigned readings. Participant One remarked that in preparation for this class she referred to the previous handout on the Distinctive Traits of Contemporary Theologies that included a section on how the various theologies viewed the doctrine of salvation and through her reflection, it seemed as if Christians developed doctrines to suit their needs rather than believing the bible as it is presented. She also admitted that the readings aroused questions regarding the theology of our particular church. Participant Two noted that she did not believe that most people knew or understood the theological stance of a church prior to becoming

members. The researcher guided the group in discussion of the following: 1. Who is the historical Jesus? 2. How could two natures, human and divine exist in one person? 3. What is meant by atonement? 4. What evidence can you give that Jesus was resurrected? Handouts of the assigned readings were distributed and the session closed in prayer.

The fourth session opened with a devotion led by Participant Two. Theological observations were shared on the topic of the doctrine of human nature, sin and grace. Participant One shared a story that she had seen on the news regarding a seven- year old boy who had driven off in his parents' car because he did not want to go to church. She questioned the ability to establish an "age of accountability" for persons because though the boy was only seven years of age, it was obvious from the story that he realized his actions were wrong. Remarks were made regarding a comment that had been made in an earlier session regarding one of the participants being uncomfortable when persons of different nationalities were performing maintenance work in their home. It was the consensus of the participants that the feeling of uneasiness was understandable but was similar to what many African Americans had endured over the years. A class participant asked if we thought that homosexuals were made in the image of God. This led into a discussion of what it means to be human and made in the image of God. Discussion questions were: 1. What makes us human? 2. Did you evolve or were you created? 3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God? 4. How does the sin of Adam and Eve affect humanity? 5. If God is good and all God made is good, where did evil come from? 6. What does it mean to be "saved"? 7. How are people saved? Fifteen minutes were reserved at the end of class to discuss the presentations to be done on the last session. Session closed in prayer.

The fifth session was conducted on August 1, 2009. The devotion was led by Participant Three. The topic for the day was the doctrine of the church. Participants shared theological observations. Discussion questions were: 1.What is the meaning of ecclesiology? 2. What do you think is meant by the term "one holy, catholic and apostolic"? 3. What is the purpose of the church? 4. What is the difference between these church structures- Congregational, Presbyterian and Episcopal? Discussion centered on the use of the title bishop in Baptist churches. The juxtaposition of congregational structure and Episcopal structure was discussed. The session was closed in prayer. Through mutual agreement the last session was scheduled for the following Thursday night.

The last session opened with devotion led by the researcher. The next fifteen minutes were used to administer the Post Project Assessment Questionnaire. A guideline was distributed with information for each participant to complete a "creedal statement" to be submitted to the researcher within two weeks. Project participants made presentations on some aspect of Christian theology in the practice of ministry (Appendix D).

Participant Two presented an original poem entitled "The Holy Spirit" wherein she shared how her new insight into the person of the Holy Spirit had changed the way she recognized God's presence in her life.

Participant Four presented on the topic Liberation Theology. She began by popping popcorn with an air popcorn machine and passed out popcorn to each person to signify that various theologies have "popped up like popcorn" throughout history and that all persons having a theology or perspective on God. She went on to give an overview of Liberation Theology and offered reasons why she claimed the tenets of this theology as

her own.

Participant One began her presentation by donning an apron and then used a silver tray to pass out small slips of paper to each participant. The slips of paper were used to represent the "gifts of the spirit" that are bestowed to Christian believers by the Holy Spirit. She explained the gifts that she had received and asked each participant to share the nature of their individual gifts as well.

Participant Three made a presentation on the topic of "salvation." Her presentation involved posters of various occupations which were used to provide safety to the general public. Examples were a lifeguard, firefighter and police officer. Her explanation that salvation to her meant that humanity was in danger of hell and Jesus came along and rescued humankind from their certain demise. She stated that the major emphasis of Jesus was to present himself as a rescuer just as those who were portrayed in the poster being displayed.

The researcher applauded the participants for their creative presentations and thanked each of them for participating in the project. The group decided at this time to go to a local restaurant for an End of Project Dinner. Following a closing prayer by the researcher, the participants left for dinner.

Analysis of Data

The results of the Pre/Post Assessment Instruments of each participant were analyzed for similarities and differences. Responses were as follows:

Participant One

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: The study of God.

Post Assessment Answer: The study of God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: The sovereign being, the creator of all things. The triune God, Father, Son (our Savior), the Holy Spirit, our guide that empowers us to live a godly life.

Post Assessment Answer: He is my Creator, Savior and friend.(Guide) He is my life , the one who keeps me . He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, the creator of all things.

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: He is fully God (holy, without sin, sovereign) the only God our creator of all yet he was fully man as we are. He knows our feelings, weaknesses; he cares, has compassion, love, etc.

Post Assessment Answer: He was fully God (spirit, without sin, possessing all the attributes of the godhead yet he was fully man with all the physical qualities except without sin (wept, had compassion, felt pain etc.)

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: The need of a savior- to recognize that need and to confess and believe Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; that he died, buried and resurrected for our sins and forgave us.

Post Assessment Answer: To believe I am a sinner who God loved so much He

sent his son Jesus to die in my place to forgive my sin, redeem me and put me back in right relationship with God to keep me by the Holy Spirit.

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: To be like God, have his attributes; holy and acceptable, love; recognize we are spirit as He is.

Post Assessment Answer: To be like God; to reflect God, I will not argue the physical, but I believe God is spirit and his spirit is in me. I can live in his likeness, kind merciful, loving etc.

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: God. He created everything.

Post Assessment Answer: All things were created by God, so was evil.

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: A meeting place with God but also in each of us to fulfill the purpose of God in us.

Post Assessment Answer: To do the work of God, called to live for Christ and share in the word and work of salvation through Christ.

Participant Two

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: The study of God through His word.

Post Assessment Answer: The study of God through His word.

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: He is Creator of all things. He is my salvation

from eternal death to eternal salvation. He is my confidant.

Post Assessment Answer: He is Creator, sustainer, life eternal. He is my very existence. He is I AM.

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: The divinity of Jesus is His Holiness as God. The humanity of Jesus is His human side as He lived on earth.

Post Assessment Answer: Jesus' divinity is the God/Holy/glorified side of Him. Jesus' humanity is the human side of His earthly journey.

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: Salvation is to be saved from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ

Post Assessment Answer : To be saved from being lost; to be forgiven from sin; to be set free; to be reconciled to God; to have eternal life.

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: In the beginning God said "let us make man in our image." This image to me is His love for all things and His moral image of right and wrong.

Post Assessment Answer: To reflect His moral image through the fruit of the Spirit.

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: Evil entered the world when the serpent caused Eve to question the word of God in the Garden of Eden.

Post Assessment Answer: From the desire of Satan to be above the authority of

God and his ability to turn the angels away from God; also, when Cain killed Abel out of envy.

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: To draw people together to worship and praise the Lord; to learn of His word and to send out those that have gathered to evangelize to the world the kingdom of God and salvation through Christ and to make disciples and baptize in the name of Jesus.

Post Assessment Answer : To teach people about the kingdom of God through the work of Christ; to serve the needy through the gifts of the people; to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Participant Three

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: Theology is the study of God.

Post Assessment Answer: Theology is the study of God in various ways; studying the various aspects of God.

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: One God identified as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Post Assessment Answer: I believe in the one true God, the creator of heaven and earth whose son died for me and was resurrected whose Holy Spirit dwells in me.

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: Jesus being God is divine. Jesus having become

flesh is human.

Post Assessment Answer: The divinity of Jesus Christ is Jesus in the spiritual nature, his godliness. The humanity of Jesus relates to his human nature apart from his reign and rule as God. He is viewed as full man in his humanity.

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: Salvation is to be saved from damnation to hell through belief in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to receive salvation because He paid the price for my sins (death) and has provided the only way to be saved.

Post Assessment Answer: Salvation is to have eternal life with God through Jesus . Salvation is to be forgiven of sin, to be reconciled to God and to be no longer lost, no longer headed to eternal death.

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: To be made in the image of God is to have a spirit (God is spirit). It is to have a conscious (God thinks and plans). It is to have free will. We have a choice in obeying God, but there are consequences for disobedience.

Post Assessment Answer: To be made in the image of God is to have the attributes of God; to have a spirit; to think, feel, reason and have choice in matters of eternity.

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: All things were made by Him; and without him was not anything made that was made. God created evil for his purpose known to him, similarly hell was created by God for his purpose known to him.

Post Assessment Answer: The earth is the Lord's and fullness thereof. Nothing exists that did not exist without Him. Even evil has a purpose and only God knows the

purpose of evil.

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: The purpose of the church (body of Christ) is to build the kingdom of God through our love for God and each other.

Post Assessment Answer: The purpose of the church is to be a place where people can worship corporately, can receive teaching as God imparts wisdom, knowledge and understanding to the Pastor.

Participant Four

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: The study of the word of God.

Post Assessment Answer: The study of the word of God.

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: God is the creator of everything that was, is and is to come. He is neither male nor female. All powerful and all knowing. There is only one true and living God.

Post Assessment Answer: Everything – all knowing- ever present- all powerful; the one and only true and living God; father/daddy, the lover of my soul.

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: Divinity – understanding, knowledge and wisdom through the study of the sacred word of God; the Humanity of Jesus- Jesus' earthly walk and work; the totality of His earthly connection with us for us through teaching as well at the direction of the Father.

Post Assessment Answer: Divinity- the holiness of Jesus- spiritual- Godness!; humanity of Jesus-those earthly acts and His earthly presence in the midst of men/women/children.

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: Salvation is the opportunity to be saved through the grace and mercy of Jesus the Christ; to have life everlasting as a child of the kingdom of God.

Post Assessment Answer: Salvation is the saving power of God through his son Jesus Christ for us to have eternal life to be reconciled to Him.

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: The image of God is what He designed for us physically mentally, emotionally and spiritually; how He is as to what we should be and become.

Post Assessment Answer: In His image we are chosen vessels created in the making to mirror Him; having His gifts, His character and His love.

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: From the before Genesis; when Satan (also known as former angel) was thrown out of the kingdom of God.

Post Assessment Answer: Evil came from God-manifested as a purposeful plan to align and assign us with God our Father.

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: The purpose of the church is to embrace the five-fold ministry to its fullest so that God's kingdom is continually building.

Post Assessment Answer: It is to go forth presenting, teaching the Word of God in

demonstration the love He has given us; to bring others to Christ; to take care of the lost, the homeless, the widows and he entire congregation. To lift up the spiritual needs of others; to liberate those to the light and life of Christ- teaching salvation.

Participant Five

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: The study of God's Word.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: He is all knowing, all powerful, everywhere. He is the epitome of love.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: Jesus is both God and man. His divine nature is that he is God in the flesh. He is the Word with skin. His humanness comes from his earthly experiences. It is his ability to relate to man in our sin nature.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: Salvation is being saved from our sins. It is new birth in Christ. It is re-united with God. It is the promise of eternal life through our belief in Jesus birth, life, death, burial and resurrection.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: With His characteristics; love compassion truth. We are made in his likeness; all the goodness he possesses he made available to us when he breathed life into us.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: It came from God. He is the Creator of all things.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: The purpose of the church is to create disciples and teach about Christ. We are called to spread the good news of Jesus as a church we are to continually encourage unbelievers and to edify God.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Participant Six

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer: The study of the Word of God.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer: God is our Father. He is a Part of the Trinity. He is the one who sent Jesus to die for our sins.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer: He is both God and man.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer: Salvation is the deliverance from darkness (sin) into His marvelous light (to be saved from sin).

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer: To be made in His likeness.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer: Evil came from Satan.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer: To spread the gospel of Jesus Christ; to witness for Him; to teach, preach, fellowship, with other believers.

Post Assessment Answer: None

Post Project Interview Results

About one and a half months after the last session, post project interviews were conducted by the researcher with each of the participants. These interviews were used to discover if the participants could discuss ways that the project had impacted them and the information was being used in ministry.

Question One: How many years have you been a member of PGBC?

Participant One: Sixteen years

Participant Two: Thirteen Years

Participant Three: Twelve Years

Participant Four: Twelve Years

Question Two: What ministries have you served?

Participant One: Intercessory Prayer, Children's Church, Vacation Bible School, Discipleship Training

Participant Two: Unity Choir, Twenty Four Hour Prayer, Intercessory Prayer Missionaries, Evangelism, Office Volunteer

Participant Three: Children's Church, Puppet Ministry, Evangelism

Participant Four: Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry Health Ministry.

Question Three: Can you point to a new learning that you acquired during the project?

Participant One: Church History, history of denominations, explanation of doctrines, understanding the different belief systems of various denominations, better understanding on the concept of the Trinity

Participant Two: God and the Holy Spirit and His place in our life. Because of the Holy Spirit, we have power.

Participant Three: I gained an understanding of the different church structures. The church history aspects; the causes of denominationalism and the particularity of church practices was new information.

Participant Four: I have a better understanding of the characteristics of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The historical aspects given of the church was good information.

Question Four: Will you be able to integrate this new learning into your ministry practice? If so, how so?

Participant One: Yes, I believe enlightenment comes with responsibility. I must teach information accurately and integrate the concepts that I have learned into the Children's Church curriculum. This will help me to explain to others who God is; I can thoroughly explain the concept of Trinity to participants of Children's church.

Participant Two: It is my desire to be a Biblical Counselor and I would like to keep the Word of God in my heart and remember to hear God and the Holy Spirit speak to me before I respond. I am practicing hearing God's presence more since this project completion.

Participant Three: Yes, I am able to share this knowledge. I am able to use this knowledge in the area of evangelism when I am asked questions such as, are Catholics going to heaven? Also I can address questions concerning the reasons for infant baptism.

Participant Four: Yes, in my preachment.

Question Five: Would you recommend a similar course to persons preparing for ministry? To others?

Participant One: Some aspects for everyone; everyone needs to know the meaning of the terms that they use and the beliefs of the church. Ministers should learn the history of the church and know the meaning of terms, creeds, and doctrines. It is important for ministers to learn to pay attention to what is said in preachment. They should be sure that it is accurate and truthful.

Participant Two: Yes, people could learn how God plays a part in our everyday lives. The more technical parts could be in a course for ministers to stimulate persons to

want to learn more. This would be a great introduction to theology course.

Participant Three: Yes, in a small setting where questions can be asked and persons are not intimidated.

Participant Four: Yes, but longer.

Question Six: What did you like most about the course?

Participant One: The discussion that was generated by the assigned readings. I really enjoyed the communication with other ministers.

Participant Two: The study of God; learning more about God; group discussions

Participant Three: The group interaction and the discussions; the teaching

Participant Four: The opportunity to dialogue and discuss matters of faith. The resource material was excellent.

Question Seven: What did you like the least?

Participant One: We needed more time.

Participant Two: The writing of papers.

Participant Three: Journaling

Participant Four: Journaling. There was not enough time. It was too compressed.

Question Eight: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Participant One: N/A

Participant Two: Black Theology was new information. It helped me make sense of my childhood church. I now understand why the content of the pastor's messages was about social justice issues. The pastor was trying to keep people from starving and being killed by the Klan. I could not understand why he did not teach or preach on the Holy Spirit. I believe he lacked an understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit. They did not

have to try to survive on might, they should have focused on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Participant Three: *I* really enjoyed the presentations. I believe that each of us presented the "right" information that was relevant to us. It was a good session. .

Participant Four: N/A

Outcome

The researcher initially sought to develop a model that would allow ministers to explore their theological beliefs, values and assumptions. An examination of the journal entries submitted indicated that critical reflection was an ongoing occurrence during the six week project period. A journal entry from Participant Three gave highlights of a conversation she shared with her son with reference to not accepting every statement as truth regardless of the source. She indicated that her son was reluctant to accept the truth about a matter from her because of the source of the information. She indicated that many people in the church and world are like her son. Even when presented with the truth, many persons prefer to hold on to erroneous information because of trust in the source outweighs the truth. During the post project interview, all participants noted the group discussion component of the project as the most enjoyable aspect of the project experience. The group discussion generated inclusive dialogue which produced questions as well as an identification of similarities and differences in thought held by the participants. The pre and post questionnaire was used by the researcher to evaluate how they articulated their understanding of theological concepts at the beginning of the project and at the completion. The researcher did not note any significant differences in the

written articulation of their understanding of the concepts, however had been able to observed thoughtful refection of those concepts during group discussions.

It was an aim of the project that the participants would be able to see the value of bringing theological lens into their reflective thinking. The participants demonstrated that they had not just acquired new knowledge but they had actively questioned their existing beliefs about God. This reflection was evident in the completion of creedal statements which were created by each participant (Appendix E). One participant shared how during a professional conference she took the positive statements made by the speaker and restated them using "God" language. Her rewritten quotes were the content of her journal entry for the week.

Transformative learning is said to have occurred when one's critical reflection leads to reflective action. Transformative learning was demonstrated through the integration of the new material into the practice of ministry which was reported to have occurred that be in the form of teaching, evangelism and preaching. Participant Two reflected during the post project interview that understanding of Black theology helped her to understand her childhood church. She indicated that as she now understands that the ministers were prophetic ministers whose concern was keeping people from starving and preventing church members from being killed by the "Klan" She indicated that as an adult she held anger and contempt for those ministers because of a feeling that they had not preached enough about salvation. She indicted that as a result of this class, she is no longer angry as she understands the need for that type of preaching in that particular context.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

The project syllabus outlined the goals of the project were to allow for critical reflection of theological concepts while exploring the participants' existing theological framework and integrating and articulation of those concepts into their life and ministry. The researcher set out with an assumption that each participant would be able to articulate their existing assumptions, beliefs and attitudes about God. The enthusiasm shown by the participants in doing so exceeded expectations. Participants completed the assignments required and began each session with eager participation. The depth of comments and questions generated during the group discussions was the highlight of the project and demonstrated an active engagement with the project content. The willingness to seek out additional resources for information was unexpected but welcomed.

Summary

The project was developed as a two hour session that met for six weeks in the Educational wing of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. The participants were purposely chosen as those who were already licentiate ministers at the church or were in preparation for licensure and had not engaged in a formal theological education. The first session introduced the course and the requirements and also provided a didactic on relevant

theological terms and an overview of contemporary theologies. The second session introduced the topic of the doctrine of God with an overlap in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The group participants were involved in an interactive and inclusive dialogue where they openly discussed their beliefs on this area. Much of the discussion centered on the doctrine of the Trinity and how to best describe this concept to others. The third session was centered around the doctrine of Christ and the His work. During this session the group discussion included much reflection on the similarities and differences on the participants understand in relation to Calvinism and Armenian theologies.

Participants left this session with a renewed interest in reviewing the reading material for more insight. During the fourth session, participants engaged in a lively discussion on human nature, sin and grace. This discussion focused on what it means to be made in the image of God and the dialogue touched on controversial subjects such as homosexuality and prejudices held by the participants. On the fifth session, the topic of the church was introduced. In 2008, the senior pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church was consecrated as a bishop of the church. Participants were able to ask informed questions regarding the dichotomy of a church organized with congregational governance establishing an Episcopal clerical order. There were many "aha" moments on this day as participants for the first time understood the difference between congregational governance and an Episcopalian governance. On the last session the participants completed the post project questionnaire designed to evaluate any changes in their written expression of theological concepts. Finally each participant made a presentation involving some aspect of Christian theology wherein they demonstrated an integration of the concepts into their practice of ministry. Over the next one to two months, the

researcher conducted post project interviews with the participants to assess their reaction to the project and to assess any perceived impact of the project in their lives and ministry. Interview comments indicated that the participants had indeed incorporated the acquired learning into their ministry practice and at least two participants were consciously engaging in theological reflection. Each participant submitted a personalized creedal statement after reflection and review of project.

Conclusion

While the researcher did not set out to download a set of theological facts to the participants, much information was imparted. The fact that the participants were able to integrate those learning concepts into their reflections, begin to develop a theological vocabulary and integrate those reflections into their practice of ministry was the intended outcome. The group discussions indicated that the participants grasped the meanings of the theological concepts but were also able to articulate the similarities and differences with their own beliefs. The weekly journaling demonstrated the participants' willingness to become consciously aware of the "God" moments throughout their daily living and document those musings. Presentations made by the participants at the end of the project highlighted their ability to integrate their knowledge and reflections into practical ways in the respective ministry areas.

The time restraints for the project implementation and completion greatly influenced the research design. While the design was adequate to cover the subject area, if fully implemented existing modules would be expanded. Modules covering the topics of Church History, denominational history and the doctrine of eschatology would be

included as well. Utilizing more of the traditional steps for theological reflection such as case studies and the documenting of previous ministry experiences in addition to theological observation may also be considered. While the number of participants in the project was less than was desired, the desired outcome was accomplished as verified by the participant's deepening theological understanding and their commitment to promoting the critical reflection of their beliefs. Additional participants however would have permitted the researcher to evaluate additional areas of ministry that could be impacted by the project. The researcher will propose to the pastor that a program of this kind be considered as an option to persons engaged in Preparation for Ministry classes.

The researcher initially engaged in this process with the questions: "What benefit is there in exploring the theological framework of ministers"? How can theological reflection impact the practice of ministry" Through this process it has been confirmed through the project results and also through the ministry of the researcher, that a critical reflection of one's beliefs, values and attitudes adds value to the practice of ministry. During the design and research phase, the researcher was afforded an opportunity to reflect upon her own theological framework and the importance of not becoming static in one's thinking. The researcher also became more adept in group facilitation while allowing the project participants to reach their own conclusions without actively steering them to a "right" response.

APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Participant #

Question One: What is your definition of theology?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer:

Question Two: Who is the God in whom you believe?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

Question Three: What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

Question Four: What is meant by salvation?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

Question Five: What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

Question Six: Where did evil come from?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

Question Seven: What is the purpose of the church?

Pre Assessment Answer:

Post Assessment Answer

APPENDIX B

SESSION OUTLINES AND MODULE

DATE

Dear Co-laborer,

I am enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. The program is designed to be completed in 2 ½ years and I am currently beginning the project implementation phase of the program. The focus of my project will be to explore the theological framework of ministers and those called into the ministry who has not been formally trained in theology.

Bishop Scott has granted permission for me to conduct a six-week seminar at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and to invite members of the ministerial staff to participate. I will need 6 – 10 participants for this project.

The seminar sessions are slated to begin in July and run for a six week period. Each participant will be asked to write their "Call to Ministry" experience to determine their acknowledgment and commitment to their ministry work.

Seminar sessions will introduce various topics in the area of Theology and Doctrine and will be discussion centered. Group presentations will a major teaching method for the sessions. The outcome of the project will be presented as a narrative description.

Please note the following:

It is important that you commit to attend all the sessions.
Assigned readings should be completed prior to attending the next session.
Participants will be required to work in groups and make a group presentation
Participants will be asked to complete evaluation forms at the completion of the seminar.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this project. I am grateful for your support. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

In His Service,

Rev. Veronica R. Coleman

PARTICIPANT'S BASIC INFORMATION

NAME _____
Last First MI

ADDRESS _____
Number and Street Name

_____
City State Zip

NAME OF CHURCH _____

NAME OF PASTOR_____

OCCUPATION_____

AGE under 20_____ 20-29____ 30-39_____ 40-49_____ 50-59_____ over 60_____

ETHNICITY African-American____ Caucasian_____ Hispanic_____ Asian_____
Native American_____ Other_____

LEVEL OF EDUCATION
High School Diploma_____ GED_____
B.A. or B.S _____ M.A. or M.S_____
Ed.D or Ph.D _____ M.Div _____
Bible School _____ Other_____

Are you licensed in the ministry?_____ yes _____no If yes, what was your licensure date? _____

Are you preparing for licensure in the ministry? _____ yes _____no

Are you ordained? _____yes _____no If yes, what was your ordination date?
_____

Module One

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CALL

Each participant will be required to write a two page double spaced paper describing their "call" into the ministry to be shared on the first class session.

Guidelines for writing the "call" story

In your writing seek to provide answers to the following:

- Give your definition of a "call"
- Cite one biblical example of a "call" into ministry
- Recall events, in order that led up to your "call" to ministry
- What have you been called to do?
- Discuss your "call" to ministry as it relates to the needs of the local church

Participants will be invited to share the events leading up to their "call" into the ministry.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGICAL TERMS, SOURCES AND METHODS

Participants will complete a questionnaire which will be used to evaluate current understanding of theological concepts.

Facilitator will provide handouts on major contemporary theologies as well as definitions of pertinent terms and lead group in discussion of same.

Participants will keep a journal during the six week session and record theological observations noted throughout the week.

Participants will receive a reading assignment for the next session and be required to write a one page reaction paper on the material to be used for discussion purposes at the next class session.

"Let's Talk About God"

TERMS

Theology- the study of God- from "theos" (God) and "logos" (word) - Seeks to summarize and systemize what the Bible says about God, the world and the relationship between them.

It also seeks to learn from ways that Christians have understood the Bible throughout history and think about our present lives as Christian.

Doctrine- Teachings and beliefs about a particular subject

Why Study Doctrine?

1. Aids the Christian in connecting how we live and what we believe.
2. Aids us in being an informed theologian. (We are all theologians because we all think about God).
3. Aids us in passing the gospel on faithfully and accurately to the next generation of believers.
4. Aids in presenting gospel to unbelievers.

Method - How we do theology-

Sources- sources of guidance and/or sources of challenge/opposition to the theology- Bible, Tradition- church history (creeds, confessions), experience, social conditions,

Creeds- statement developed by the church before the various splits in the church (Nicene Creed, Apostles Creed)

Confessions- a statement produced by one particular tradition

Catechism- a statement developed by a particular tradition for use in teaching the full scope of doctrine believed by that tradition

Structure- Pattern used to present the theology-

Bible application to life,

History of teaching of the church□ Bible□ experience

Social conditions□ Christianity's response

Authority- How much weight to give to the various sources of theology

Bible as "inerrant"- the Bible interpreted correctly is without error in all matters including history, geography, science and doctrine

Bible as "infallible" – the Bible interpreted correctly is inerrant on matters of faith and practice and accomplishes its purpose

Analogy- theological concept that guides our understanding of how language refers to God; though our language is limited and not identical to God's reality, our language does tell us something about God.

Module Two

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Facilitator will led the participants in a devotion centered on the topic of the day.

Participants will share one journal entry or theological observation from the previous week.

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the God in whom you believe? By what name (or nickname) do you most call God?
2. How do you know that God exists?
3. Think about the attributes of God? What is your experience with those attributes?
4. What is meant by the Trinity?

Participants will receive a reading assignment for the next session and be required to write a one page reaction paper on the material to be used for discussion purposes at the next class session.

Students will volunteer (and/or) be assigned to provide a 5 minute or less devotion at the next session.

Module Three

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON AND THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

Session will begin with participant led devotion.

Participants will share one journal entry or theological observation from the previous week.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is the historical Jesus?
2. How could two natures, human and divine exist in one person?
3. What is meant by the term atonement?
4. What evidence can you give that Jesus was resurrected?
5. What does it mean to be saved? Can everyone be saved or just some? Explain

Participants will receive a reading assignment for the next session and be required to write a one page reaction paper on the material to be used for discussion purposes at the next class session.

Students will volunteer (and/or) be assigned to provide a 5 minute or less devotion at the next session.

Module Four

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN NATURE, SIN AND GRACE

Session will begin with participant led devotion.

Participants will share one journal entry or theological observation from the previous week.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you evolve or were you created?
2. What makes us human?
3. What does it mean to be made "in the image of God?"
4. How does the sin of Adam and Eve affect humanity?
5. If God is good and all God made is good, where did evil come from?
6. What does it mean to be "saved"?
7. How are people saved?

Participants will receive a reading assignment for the next session and be required to write a one page reaction paper on the material to be used for discussion purposes at the next class session.

Students will volunteer (and/or) be assigned to provide a 5 minute of less devotion at the next session.

Module Five

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Session will begin with a participant-led devotion.

Participants will share one journal entry or theological observation from the previous week.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you know the meaning of ecclesiology?
2. What is meant by the term "one holy, catholic, and apostolic"?
3. What is the purpose of the church?
4. What is the difference between these church structures- congregational, Presbyterian and Episcopal?

Participants will receive a reading assignment for the next session and be required to write a one page reaction paper on the material to be used for discussion purposes at the next class session.

Students will volunteer (and/or) be assigned to provide a 5 minute of less devotion at the next session.

Module Six

GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

Participants will complete the post-survey assessment instrument.

GROUPS OF 3- 5 students will make a presentation to the class on some aspect of Christian theology. Emphasis should be on the utilization of the information in the practice of ministry and/or daily living. Presentations may be in the form of skits, sermons, lectures, artful expression, etc.

Assignment: Each participant will submit their individual creedal statements to the facilitator within two weeks.

Participants will complete an evaluation of the Seminar.

Pre-Project / Post-Project Questionnaire

"Let's Think about God"

1. What is your definition of theology?

_____
_____
_____

2. Who is the God in whom you believe?

_____
_____
_____

3. What is meant by the divinity and the humanity of Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

4. What is meant by salvation?

_____
_____
_____

5. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

_____
_____
_____

6. Where did evil come from?

_____
_____
_____

7. What is the purpose of the church?

_____
_____
_____

Guidelines for Journal Entries

1. Participants should write in the journal at least weekly.
2. Note one specific new learning acquired over the last week (if any).
3. State how the information will be used to help in your personal area of ministry.
4. Note any other theological observations acquired over the last week.

Texts

McGrath, A., *Christian Theology, An Introduction*

Musser and Price, *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*

House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*

APPENDIX C

POST PROJECT INTERVIEW

Post Project Interview

Participant # _____

How many years have you been a member of PGBC?

What ministries have you served?

Can you point to one new learning experience that you acquired during the project?

Will you be able to integrate this new learning into your ministry practice? If so, how?

Would you recommend a similar course to persons preparing for ministry?

Would you recommend a similar course to others?

What did you like most about the course?

What did you like the least?

What additional comments do you have?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANTS FINAL PRESENTATIONS

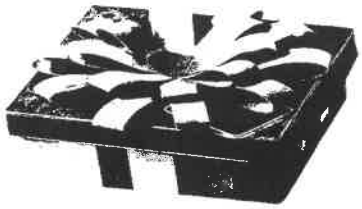
Final Presentation: Participant #1

The Holy Spirit

Are you saved but still feel lonely? Do you need Guidance and direction? Do you need power to fulfill your purpose? I'm here to bring back to your remembrance you are never alone for I am with you always: I dwell in you. I was there in the beginning and I'll help you till the end. I'll guide you and tell you when you're in sin but be assured in your salvation. I'll teach you my ways and give you understanding you couldn't possibly imagine. Since I am omnipotent, guess what, you've got power to live in a Christ like manner and to do the work of the Father. Look, I'm also omniscient so I'm available to counsel you every step of the way. You are going to be filled with the spirit and you'll have gifts for the work. Now, stir up the gift and be renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost in Jesus Name.

(Attributes are underlined)

Open the Gift box and give each person a gift (i.e. faith, miracles, healing, etc.)



Gift of prophecy Gift of Miracles Gift of Healing

Gift of Faith Gift of tongues Gift of serving

Final Presentation: Participant #2

"The Holy Spirit in Me"
8/13/09

The Holy Spirit of God that hovered over the waters at creation is the same that lives in me.
He breathed life into Adam in the Garden and in my mother's womb at my conception just for me.
The Spirit impregnated Mary with Jesus just so I would have a way of escape from a sinful death.
In me the Holy Spirit has brought Christ into my soul and spirit just because I believed that Jesus is Lord.
Because Jesus is Lord the Spirit of God indwelled in me so that I will know that I am never alone.
To feel alone is to not have the **love** of God abiding with me.
After Jesus died He sent the Spirit back so I would not be orphan and He is with me today and His Spirit has filled me with love.
This love surpasses all understanding and brings me joy.
Joy unspeakable is my song of praise.
Joy divine fills me with the confidence of an over comer and gives me the stride of victory.
In the confidence of my victory I have gained **peace**.
In peace the Spirit moves my anxieties and allows me to rest in the arms of my God.
Weeping may endure for a night but joy brings peace and peace brings the patience I need to wait on God.
Patience is a virtue but it will slowly drift away if the Spirit of God does not breathe a fresh anointing into my drifting situation.
My drifting situation stopped under the shadow of the Almighty and caused me to draw others into His Shadow with **kindness**.
With this kindness His **goodness** overflowed my soul and opened my heart to others.
In others I became a friend that was dependable and **faithful**.
In my faithful devotion to others the Spirit taught me how to be **gentle**.
The Spirit of God that dwells in me turned my angry into gentleness and gentleness into **self-control**.
The Holy Spirit that dwells in me restrains my emotion with the still small voice of God.
Through the love of God He rejuvenates my soul and reminds me that the Word is alive and so is Christ.
The Holy Spirit in me lifts me to higher heights and deeper depths on this journey to my eternity.
My eternity is assured because I believe the Spirit of God abides in me and me in Him.
The Holy Spirit lives in me.

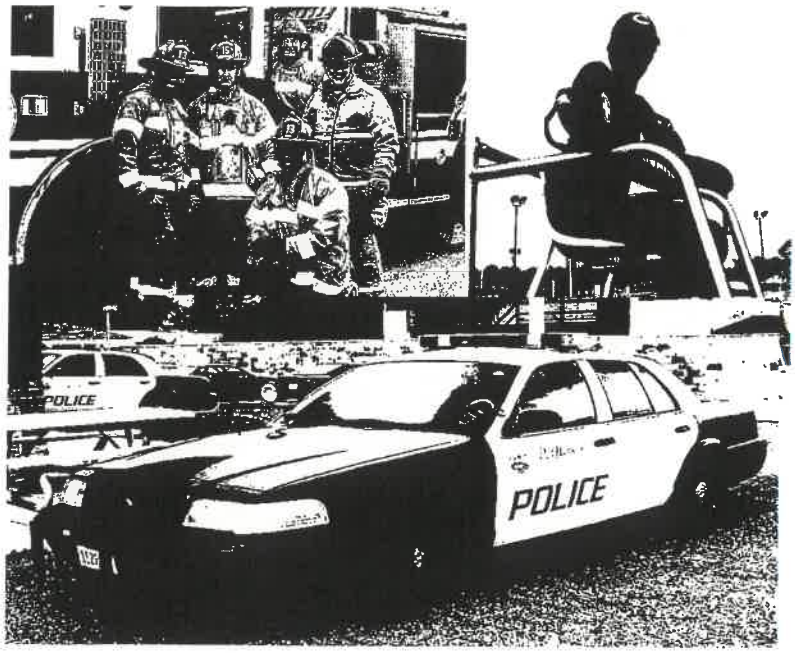
Final Presentation: Participant #3

Understanding Salvation

The main focus of the presentation I chose to do was to demonstrate how important it is for us who are mature believers to have a clear understanding about salvation and to be able to articulate that understanding to someone when we are asked or if we ask someone, "What does it mean that Jesus saves"?

When presented with the images such as a fireman, lifeguard, etc., and given the questions, "What does a fireman save us from?" How about a lifeguard," What does a lifeguard save us from?" We can easily expect clear answers such as, a fireman saves us from burning buildings and a lifeguard saves us from drowning. However, when asked, "What does Jesus save us from?" many times there is hesitation to answer as though we have to think about it deeply. I know. I did the same thing. It isn't that I didn't know as I suspect most believers do, it's just that I needed to sort through what I do know so that when answering this one question I could give a clear answer. Two reasons are given. Though there are far more reasons than just two, for our purposes only two reasons will be given.

Jesus saves us from eternal damnation. We are born into sin and need a savior. Jesus is our savior from eternal damnation - hell. Jesus saves us from sin. When we accept Jesus as our savior we are forgiven of all the sins we have committed. Yes, there are of course many more things that Jesus saves us from such as, the clutches of the enemy - Satan, being spiritual blind, guilt and shame of our past, "whom the Son sets free is free indeed", and many more. As mentioned however, this is not in any way a complete list. The most important thing is that we consider this question, think about it and have a clear explanation so that when we are asked, we can respond clearly and confidently.



Final Presentation: Participant #4

Liberation Theology – The Chosen of the Kernels

At a time of the historical foundations of the Word/Religions when numerous theological systems where popping up, the priests and religious leaders shared their thoughts and ideals with one another to shape distinctive theologies. Systems, such as the traditional Roman Catholic Theology, Lutheran Theology, Reformed Theology, Wesleyan Theology, Black Theology, and Feminist Theology to name a few, provided heated debates amongst church leadership during their development of years past as well as today. Thus, the demonstration of the cooking of popcorn was chosen as the best way to indicate the theological systems that seemed to be constantly formulated. It was a time of evolution that sometimes translated into revolution. On the religious scene, everything seemed to be heated up!

And so upon the foregone statement, the chosen kernel that best incorporates my personal theological framework is Liberation Theology. I knew that this was the best indicator of whom I am and who God is ever heating up within me. I came to this decision based upon the movement of the Holy Spirit within me as I processed the provided written information and indulged in further study on my own. The exploration of the numerous theologies through group discussions as individuals allowed others to expound on their understandings and beliefs was extremely helpful. In such a setting, it allowed me the opportunity to exam myself, my stance, and my beliefs for the ministry that God has placed within me. Like the heated pressure to the corn - ministry ignites!

The core concepts of Liberation Theology regarding God, attentive to the poor and oppressed and Christ, as a moral influence on the side of the poor and oppressed is

proven over and over again within the bible. Through the revelation of placing emphasis on ethics to achieve an end is important to me as well. Also, achieving salvation through social change and justice as a guide to follow is critically important for my ministry. With all of this understanding, I also know that Liberation Theology is not the submission to the strategy of "going with the flow" is not an option.

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANTS CREEDAL GUIDELINES AND STATEMENTS

YOUR CREEDAL STATEMENT

"So What Do You Say About God"?

Use the following as a guide in writing your statement. You may also refer to the handouts of the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed.

MY CREED

I believe in God, _____.
I believe in Jesus Christ, _____ .
I believe in the Holy Spirit, _____.
I believe in the church. The church is _____.

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary

Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried;

He descended into hell

The third day he rose again from the dead

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead

I believe in the Holy Ghost

I believe a holy catholic church; the communion of saints

The forgiveness of sins

The resurrection of the body

And the life everlasting. Amen.

Creedal Statement – Participant #1

I believe in God, the Father Almighty creator of everything; and in the Lord God Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of the God who became flesh (man) for our salvation. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered, was crucified, gave up his life than died and buried. He descended into hell, got the victory and on the third day he rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated on the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in God the Holy Spirit, comforter, helper, God in us. I believe in the holy church of God through those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, Amen.

Creedal Statement – Participant #2

I believe in God, the Father, the creator of heaven and earth, the one and only true living God.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, My Savior and the promised Messiah. He was before, is with me, and has gone ahead of me to prepare a place for me with Him. He still lives.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the power and breath of God, the comforter and Spirit of Truth.

I believe in the Trinity: The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit of God; all three working as one to fulfill the plan and purpose of God.

Creedal Statement – Participant #3

My Creed

I believe in one God who is presented in the Bible as God the Father, creator and sustainer of all things; Jesus Christ the Son of God, Lord and Savior; and the Holy Spirit, the comforter and power of God.

I believe in the church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ consisting of those who believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and who live by His Spirit.

I believe the local church is a designated place of worship permitted by God to be established for the edifying the body of Christ, His bride.

Creedal Statement – Participant #4

My Creed

August 27, 2009

I. I believe in God, as my living divine Father, the creator of all of the earth, in the earth, on the earth, and the universe. I believe that every element of life is a reflection of His image. All that is good, possible, just, righteous, lovely, and holy is the God that I serve. He is the only eternal God! (Gen. 21:33) I believe God is the Trinity.

II. I believe in Jesus Christ, as the only son of God, who demonstrated His divine love as a sacrifice by giving His earthly life for our sinful ways. Jesus Christ is my savior - one pure and holy - the miracle worker - being both of humanity and of divinity. I believe Jesus Christ offers eternal life through God our Father. I believe Jesus Christ is the Trinity.

III. I believe in the Holy Spirit, positioned within Christian believers as a comforting indwelling gift from Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9). I believe the Holy Spirit alerts and attend to each of us guiding us towards the spiritual nuisances of that which is holy. I believe the Holy Spirit is the Trinity.

IV. I believe in the church. I believe the church is a culmination of the Trinity living within Christians wherever they dwell. Through our obedience to God, the manifestations of the church are demonstrated in servitude to His Word. Collectively, the church make up is a body of believers with one God, one faith, and one purpose - the advancement of the Kingdom.

APPENDIX F

ASSIGNED READINGS AND CHARTS

CHARTS OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE

H. WAYNE HOUSE

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49

1. Distinctive Traits of Theological Systems

Traditional Roman Catholic Theology

Nature of Theology	Theology is constantly evolving in its understanding of the Christian faith. The Ignatian principle of accommodation and J. H. Newman's principle of development reflect the changing nature of Roman Catholic theology. Catholicism's trait of change is due mainly to the authoritative position given to church teaching
Revelation	The Bible, including the Apocrypha, is recognized as the authoritative source of revelation as well as tradition and church teaching. The pope also makes authoritative pronouncements *ex cathedra* (from the chair) on issues of doctrine and morals; these pronouncements are immune from error. The church is the mother, guardian, and interpreter of the canon. Many post-Vatican II Roman Catholic scholars have deviated from the traditional teaching of the church in this area, have embraced higher critical perspectives on Scripture, and have rejected the infallibility of the pope.
Salvation	Saving grace is communicated through the seven sacraments, which are means of grace. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist deal with initiation into the church. Penance and Anointing are concerned with healing. Marriage and Orders are sacraments of commitment and vocation. The Church administers the sacraments through the ordained hierarchically ordered priesthood. The traditional view was that there was no salvation outside the church but recent teaching has recognized grace may be received outside the church. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, the bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation).
Church	The four essential qualities of the true church are unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Fundamentally the church is the ordained hierarchy, reaching its apex in the pope. Organization is built around a centralized priestly authority beginning with Peter. The authority of the priesthood is derived through apostolic succession in the church. Bishops in Rome have power to evaluate findings of schools and make pronouncements and conciliar definitions. The church is the mediator of Christ's presence in the world. God uses the church as his agent to move the world toward his kingdom.
Mary	At the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) Mary was declared to be the mother of God as well as the mother of Jesus Christ in the sense that the Son she bore was both God and man. Four Marian feasts (annunciation, purification, assumption, and nativity of Mary) are observed. Mary was without original sin or personal sin due to the intervention of God (immaculate conception). Mary is the merciful mediator between man and Christ the Judge.

Portions of this chart rely on material from *Tensions in Contemporary Theology,* eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976.). Used by permission.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Natural Theology

Definition	Natural theology is the attempt to attain an understanding of God and his relationship to the universe by means of rational reflection, without appealing to special revelation such as the self-revelation of God in Christ and in Scripture.
Epistemo-logical Foundation	God is the eternal, unchanging, sovereign, holy, personal God, creator of the universe. He has everything in his control and through his eternal decrees from eternity has planned the future. It is done in such a way that he is not morally responsible for evil.
Relation to Revealed Theology	Natural theology deals with God's existence and attributes from sources common to all men (creation, logical reasoning, etc.) whereas revealed theology deals with specific truth discerned from the Scripture. Natural theology requires reason alone whereas revealed theology requires also faith and the illumination of the Spirit.
Purpose of Natural Theology	Natural theology can be used apologetically to prove the existence of God. It also supports revealed theology. If the conclusions of natural theology are accepted, then it would be "reasonable" also to accept revealed theological truth. Thus natural theology has an evangelistic purpose
Possible Objections	Natural theology lacks a biblical basis. Natural theology attempts to exempt reason from the effects of the fall and of depravity.

Lutheran Theology

Theology	Theology builds around the three fundamental doctrines of so/a scripture (Scripture alone), sola gratia (grace alone), and sola fide (faith alone).
Christ	Christ is the center of Scripture. His person and work, especially his substitutionary death, are the basis of Christian faith and the message of salvation.
Revelation	Scripture alone is the authoritative source for theology and for church life and teaching. Scripture is the very Word of God and is as truthful and authoritative as God himself. At the center of Scripture stands the person and work of Christ. Thus Scripture's main purpose is soteriological--to proclaim the salvation message in Jesus Christ. The Word through Christ's work is God's mode of salvation.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Lutheran Theology

Salvation

Salvation comes only by grace through faith. The source of salvation is God's grace shown through Christ's work, the ground for salvation. The means for receiving salvation is faith only.

People contribute nothing toward their salvation. They are totally without a free will in respect to salvation, and thus God is the efficient cause of salvation.

The Spirit works through the word of the Gospel (including baptism and the Eucharist) to bring salvation.

The Spirit uses the baptism of infants to produce faith in them and bring them to salvation.

The Eucharist involves the actual presence of Christ with the bread and the wine though these elements remain bread and wine (consubstantiation).

The theology of the cross is to be the mark of true theology. Instead of centering on the things about God's invisible nature and works as discussed in natural theology, which Luther calls a theology of glory, Christians are to focus on the humility of God revealed in the death of Christ on the cross. In a theology of the cross, the believers come to have a knowledge of God and also a true knowledge of themselves and their relationship to God.

Anabaptist Theology

Theology

Anabaptists did not stress systematic theological studies. Rather, doctrine was forged as it applied to life. Anabaptists were characterized by missionary zeal, separation of life, and an emphasis on ecclesiology.

Revelation

The Bible is to be obeyed completely in one's life. It is the sole authority and guide. The Spirit reveals the message of the Word to the believing community. Interpretation of Scripture is discerned primarily at church gatherings. Anabaptists tend to focus on the teachings of Christ and the New Testament more than on the Old Testament.

Salvation

Sin is not so much a bondage of the free will of man as it is a lost capacity to respond to God. The free will of man allows him to repent and be obedient to the gospel. When one repents and believes, God regenerates him to walk in new life. The emphasis is more on obedience than on sin, more on regeneration than on justification.

Church

The church is a visible body of believers obedient to Christ. The church exists as a visible fellowship, not an invisible body or a state church.

Only believing adults can participate in baptism. Baptism testifies to the believer's separation from the world and commitment to obeying Christ.

The sacraments-baptism and the Lord's Supper-are only symbols of Christ's work; they impart no grace to the participant. The characteristics of a church member's life ought to be personal conversion, a holy life, suffering for Christ, separation, love for the brethren, nonresistance, and obedience to the Great Commission. The church is a kingdom of God that is in constant conflict with the evil kingdom in the world system. The church is to evangelize in the world but not to participate in its system. This precludes participation in any governmental office or military service.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Reformed Theology

Theology	Reformed theology builds around the central theme of the sovereignty of God. The whole of reality falls under the supreme rule of God.
God	God is sovereign. He is perfect in every respect and holds all righteousness and power. He created all things and sustains them. As the Creator, he is in no way limited by creation.
Revelation	Reformed theology rests on Scripture alone (so/a scriptura). The Bible is God's Word and as such remains without error in every aspect. Scripture guides all of church life and teaching. The Bible is authoritative in every area it addresses.
Salvation	God in eternity past chose a number of fallen creatures to be reconciled to himself. In time Christ came to save the chosen. The Holy Spirit enlightens the elect ones so that they can believe the Gospel and receive salvation. The elect can never resist the work of the Spirit nor fall away after receiving salvation. Salvation can be summarized by the Five Points of Calvinism: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints (TULIP).
Church	The church is composed of God's elect who have received salvation. They are bound by God's covenant to serve him in the world. Baptism symbolizes entry into the covenant body for both children and adults though either can renounce their baptism. When the believers partake in the Lord's Supper in faith, the Holy Spirit works in them to make them spiritual participants. Generally, elders, elected by the church, teach and oversee the local church body. The unity of the church must be grounded in doctrinal agreement.

Arminian Theology

Theology	Arminian theology is concerned to preserve the justice (fairness) of God. How could a just God hold individuals responsible for obedience to commands they are powerless to obey. Emphasizes divine foreknowledge, human responsibility and free will, and universal (common) enabling grace.
God	God is sovereign but has chosen to grant free will to human beings.
Salvation	God predestined to salvation those who he foreknew would repent and believe (conditional election). Christ suffered for the sins of all mankind, thus the atonement is unlimited. Salvation can be lost by a believer, and so one must strive not to fall and be lost. Christ did not pay the penalty for our sins, for if he had, then all would be saved. Rather, Christ suffered for our sins so the Father can forgive those who repent and believe. Christ's death was an example of the penalty of sin and the cost of forgiveness.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Wesleyan Theology

Theology	Wesleyan theology is essentially Arminian but has a stronger sense of the reality of sin and of dependence on divine grace.
Revelation	The Bible is divine revelation, the ultimate standard for faith and practice. However, there are four means by which truth is mediated-Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience (the Wesleyan quadrilateral). Scripture has supreme authority. Next to Scripture, experience stands as the best evidence of Christianity.
Salvation	Salvation is a three-step process of grace: prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace is the universal work of the Spirit between one's birth and salvation. Prevenient grace prevents one from moving too far from God and enables one to respond, positively or negatively, to the gospel. To those who receive the gospel, justifying grace produces salvation and begins the process of sanctification. The believer has as a goal the achievement of entire sanctification, produced by the Holy Spirit in a second work of grace Entire sanctification means that one has been perfected in love. Perfection is not absolute but relative and dynamic. When one can love without self-interest or impure motive, then he or she has achieved perfection.

Liberal Theology

Theology	Liberal theologians seek to articulate Christianity in terms of contemporary culture and thinking. They attempt to maintain the essence of Christianity in modern terms and images.
God	God is imminent. He dwells within the world and is not above it or apart from it. Thus there stands no distinction between the natural and the supernatural.
Trinity	The Father works not supernaturally but through culture, philosophy, education, and society. Liberal theology is usually Unitarian rather than Trinitarian, recognizing only the deity of the Father. Jesus was "full of God" but was not God incarnate. The Spirit is not a person within the Godhead but is simply God's activity in the world.
Christ	Christ gave a moral example for humanity. He also expressed God to us. Christ did not die to pay the penalty of our sins or impute his righteousness to man. He was neither God nor savior but merely God's representative.
Holy Spirit	The Spirit is the activity of God in the world, not a third person of the Godhead who is equal in essence to the Father and the Son.
Revelation	The Bible is a fallible human record of religious experiences and thought. The historical validity of the biblical record is doubted. Scientific assessments prove the miraculous in the Bible to be religious expression only.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Liberal Theology

Salvation	Man is not innately sinful but possesses a universal religious sentiment. The goal of salvation is not personal conversion but societal improvement. Christ set the ultimate example of what mankind is striving for and will ultimately become. Liberal theology has characteristically uniformly denied the Fall, original sin, and the substitutionary nature of the Atonement.
Future	Christ will not personally return. The kingdom will come to earth as a result of a universal moral development.

Existential Theology

Theology	Existential theologians claim that we have to "demythologize" Scripture. "To demythologize Scripture is to reject not Scripture or the Christian message, but the world-view of a past epoch." That means to explain everything supernatural as myth. The important part of Christian faith consequently becomes a subjective experience, rather than an objective truth (see Salvation). The Bible, when demythologized, does not talk about God, but about man.
God	Objective knowledge of God's existence is not possible. The concept of God was a help for the early Christians to understand themselves, but in our time, with a different world-view, we can see behind the myth. Thus, God is our statement about human life. "It is therefore clear that if a man will speak about God, he must evidently speak of himself" (Bultmann). If God exists, he works in the world as if he does not exist. And we cannot know about him in any objective way.
Trinity	The Trinity is a myth relating to the supernatural content of the Bible (see God).
Christ	Jesus is just a common man. As the New Testament is called myth, we do not have much, if any, knowledge of the "historical Jesus." That leaves us a picture of Jesus without any "divine" intervention. The Cross has no significance regarding the vicarious bearing of sins, and the Resurrection is utterly inconceivable as an historical event. This is also true of the Virgin Birth and other miracles.
Holy Spirit	All we know about the Holy Spirit belongs to the untrustworthy supernatural parts of the Bible, which are really only mythical.
Revelation	The Bible is not a source of objective information about God. To understand themselves better people in the first centuries created a myth around Jesus. He did not perform miracles nor rise from the dead. If we can "strip the myths" from the Gospel, we discover the original purpose behind the myth and can find guidance for our lives today. This is called "demythologization." The Bible becomes a book that has as its aim to transform persons through encounter.
Salvation	"Salvation" is to find one's "true self." This is done by a choice to put our faith in God, and this choice will change our view of ourselves. Salvation, then, is a change of our whole outlook and conduct in life, built on an experience of "God"; it is not a change of man's nature. As we do not know anything about God objectively, it is a matter of "faith in faith."
Myth	Bultmann understood myth as a way to speak of the Transcendent in terms of this world: "Mythology is that form of imagery in which that which is not of this world, that which is divine, is represented as though it were of this world and human; 'the beyond' is represented as 'the here and now.'"

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Neo-orthodox Theology

Theology	Neo-orthodoxy is more a hermeneutic than it is a complete systematic theology. It reacted against late-nineteenth-century liberalism and strove to retain the essence of Reformation theology while still adapting to contemporary issues. It is a theology of encounter between God and man.
God	God is wholly transcendent except when he chooses to reveal himself to man. God is totally sovereign over and free from his creation. God cannot be known through proofs (Kierkegaard). God cannot be known through objective doctrine but through an experience of revelation.
Christ	Christ as manifested in Scripture is the Christ of faith, not necessarily the historical Jesus. Christ is the revelation of God. The important Christ is the one experienced by the individual. Christ was not virgin-born (Brunner). Christ is the symbol of the new being in which all that estranges people from God is dissolved (Tillich).
Revelation	God's revelation to man through his Word is threefold. Jesus is the Word made flesh. Scripture points to the Word. Preaching proclaims the Word made flesh. The Bible contains the Word of God. The Word is revealed by the Spirit as the Bible and Christ are proclaimed. The Bible is human and fallible and is reliable only to the extent that God reveals himself through encounters with Scripture. Historicity of Scripture is unimportant. Creation account is a myth (Niebuhr) or a saga (Earth).
Salvation	Man is completely sinful and can be saved only by God's grace. The Word produces a crisis decision between the rebellion of sin and the grace of God. Only by faith can a person choose God's grace in this crisis and receive salvation. All mankind is elect in Christ (Barth). There is no such thing as inherited sin from Adam (Brunner). Man sins by choice, not because of nature (Brunner). Sin is self-centeredness (Brunner). Sin is social injustice and fear (Niebuhr). Salvation is commitment to God in a blind "leap of faith" while in despair (Kierkegaard).
Eschatology	Eternal punishment and hell are not realities (Brunner).

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Liberation Theology

Theology	Theology is not seen as a system of dogmas but rather as a way to initiate social change. This view has been called the "liberation of theology" (H. Segundo). This theology grew out of Vatican II and the liberal theologians' attempts to wrestle with social, political, and economic inequities in the face of a Christianity no longer based on a biblical world view. Much of the setting for liberation theology has been Latin America, and this theology has become an answer to the political oppression of the poor. The proponents often have different views; there is really no "unified" liberation theology. Rather, it is a number of closely related "alternatives" springing from common roots. Rather than a classical theology concerned with such theological matters as the nature of God, man, or the future, liberation theology is concerned with this world and how changes may occur through political action. In Latin America, especially, Roman Catholic theologians have sought to combine Christianity and Marxism.
God	God is active, always taking sides with the poor and oppressed and against the oppressors, so that he does not work equally for all. Liberation theologians emphasize immanence to the neglect of transcendence. He is mutable.
Christ	Jesus is seen as a messiah of political involvement. He is God entering the struggle for justice on the side of the poor and the oppressed. However, he was not a savior in the traditional meaning of the word. Instead, liberation theologians support a "moral influence" view of the atonement. There is no thought of a satisfaction of God's wrath against man.
Holy Spirit	Pneumatology is virtually absent in liberation theology. It seems hard to find a role for the work of the Holy Spirit in the man-centered political systems.
Revelation	The Bible is not a book of eternal truths and rules, but a book of specific (but often unreliable accounts of) history. However, many texts are used in support of this theology, especially the account of the Exodus. Liberation theologians use the "new" hermeneutics in order to defend their view. Because their theology is built on a Marxist analysis and seen as a useful way of creating "proper" actions (see Salvation), they primarily emphasize ethics that achieve the ends of the movement.
Salvation	Salvation is viewed as social change in society where justice for the poor and oppressed is established. "The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin" (C. Torres). Any method to that end is acceptable, even violence and revolution. The view tends toward universalism, and evangelism becomes merely an effort to create awareness to prepare people for political action.
Church	The church is perceived as a means to change society: "The pastoral activity of the church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises . . . [it] tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed" (G. Gutierrez). Political neutrality is not an option for the church.

1. Distinctive Traits (continued)

Black Theology

Theology	Black theology is a form of liberation theology that has its center in the theme of oppression of blacks by whites. It came out of the "need for black people to define the scope and meaning of black existence in a white racist society" (Cone). It emerged in the last two decades in the wave of liberation movements as an expression of black consciousness and seems to speak to the issues that blacks must contend with on a daily basis.
God	Intricate and largely philosophical views of God are largely ignored in preference for concerns of the oppressed. White Christian concepts taught to the black man thus are to be disregarded or ignored. God's person, the Trinity, his supreme power and authority as well as "subtle indications of God's white maleness" are said not to relate to (and in some cases are antagonistic to) the black experience. The dominant perspective on God is God in action, delivering the oppressed because of his righteousness. His immanence is stressed over his transcendence, and as a result he is seen to be in flux or always changing.
Trinity	The Trinity is not stressed. However, Jesus is God, but in the sense of God's visible expression of concern and salvation.
Christ	He is One who delivers, almost exclusively, in social ways. He is a liberator, or "Black Messiah" whose work of emancipation for the poor and rejected of society is the parallel to the blacks' quest for liberation. Christ's message is "black power" (Henry). His intrinsic nature and spiritual activity receive little or no attention. Some even deny his role as the atoning sacrifice for the world's sins and provider of eternal life (Shrine).
Revelation	Black theology is not bound to biblical literalism but is of a more pragmatic nature. Only the experience of black oppression is the authoritative standard.
Salvation	Salvation is freedom from oppression and pertains to blacks in this life. Proponents of black theology are concerned specifically with the political and theological aspects of salvation more than the spiritual. In other words, salvation is physical liberation from white oppression rather than freedom from the sinful nature and acts of each individual person. Presenting heaven as a reward for following Christ is seen as an attempt to dissuade blacks from the goal of real liberation of their whole persons.

2. Contemporary Feminist Theological Models

Roots of Feminist Theology

The rise of the Women's Liberation Movement from the mid-20th century helped to create a feminist critical consciousness. That consciousness, interacting with the Bible and Christian theological traditions has called for a new investigation of past paradigms and a new agenda for study. This "new" investigation and agenda have resulted in the following models.

Model	Proponents	Viewpoint
Rejectionist (Post-Christian)		Sees the Bible as promoting an oppressive patriarchal structure and rejects it as nonauthoritative.
Rejection Wing	B. Friedan, K. Millett, G. Steinem	Rejects whole Judeo-Christian traditions as hopelessly male-oriented.
Restoration Wing	M. Daly, N. Goldenberg	Restores the religion of witchcraft or accepts nature mysticism based exclusively on women's consciousness.
Loyalist (Evangelical)		Sees no radically oppressive sexism in the biblical record.
Traditional Wing	J. Hurley, S. Foh, S. Clark, G. Knight, E. Elliot, Council on Biblical Manhood and Woman-hood	Seeks order through complementary roles. The role of women in God's created order is to be fulfilled through voluntary submission and dependence in church and family (and some in society). The divine pattern for men is loving leadership. This will not diminish the true freedom and dignity of women.
Egalitarian Wing	C. Kroeger, A. Spencer, G. Bilizikian, Christians for Biblical Equality	The Bible calls for mutual submission with neither male nor female relegated to any particular role in home, church, or society based solely on gender.
Reformist (Liberation)		With rejectionists sees patriarchal chauvinism in the Bible and Christian history and has a desire to overcome it. Its commitment to liberation *as* the central message of the Bible keeps it from discarding the Christian tradition.

2. Contemporary Feminist Theological Models **(continued)**

Roots of Feminist Theology

Model	Proponents	Viewpoint
Moderate Wing	L. Scanzoni, V. Mollenkott, M. S. van Leeuwen	Through exegesis tries to bring to light the positive role of women in the Bible. Some moderate reformists search for a "usable" hermeneutic or liberation in the prophetic tradition. In texts not dealing specifically with women, they find a call to create a just society free from any kind of social, economic, or sexist oppression.
Radical Wing	E. Schussler, E. Stanton	Calls for a more far-reaching feminist "hermeneutic of suspicion." It begins with the acknowledgment that the Bible has been written, translated, canonized, and interpreted by males. The canon of faith has become male-centered. Women, through theological and exegetical reconstruction, must enter again the center stage they occupied in early Christian history.

20. Definitions of the Attributes of God

Attribute	Definition	Scripture Reference
Simplicity/ Spirituality	God is uncompounded, in complex, indivisible, unique, and spirit in essential being.	John 1:18; 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16
Unity	God is one.	Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6
Infinity	God is without termination and finitude.	1 Kings. 8:27; Ps. 145:3; Acts 17:24
Eternity	God is free from succession of time.	Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2
Immutability/ Constancy	God is unchanging and unchangeable in his being.	Ps. 102:27; Mai. 3:6; James 1:17
Omnipresence	God is present everywhere.	Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24
Sovereignty	God is the supreme ruler, independent of any authority outside of himself.	Eph. 1, esp. v. 21
Omniscience	God knows all actual and possible things.	Ps. 139:1-4; 147:4-5; Matt. 11:21
Omnipotence	God is all powerful	Matt. 19:26; Rev. 19:6
Justice	God has moral equity; he does not show favoritism.	Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11
Love	God seeks the highest good of humans at his own infinite cost.	Ps. 103: 17; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 4:8, 10
Benevolence	God has unselfish concern for the welfare of those he loves.	Deut. 7:7-8; John 3:16
Grace	God supplies those he loves with undeserved favors according to their need.	Exod. 34:6; Eph. 1:5-8; Titus 2:11

20. Definitions of the Attributes of God (continued)

Attribute	Definition	Scripture Reference
Goodness	That which constitutes the character of God and is shown by benevolence, mercy, and grace.	Exod. 33:19; Ps. 145:9
Freedom	God is independent from his creatures.	Ps. 115:3
Holiness	God is righteous, perfect, set apart or separate from all sin or evil.	1 Peter 1:16
Righteousness	Holiness applied to relationships; God's law and his actions are exactly right.	Ps. 19:7-9; Jer. 9:24a
Truth	Agreement and consistency with all that is represented by God himself.	John 14:6; 17:3
Genuineness	God is real/true.	Jer. 10:5-10; John. 17:3
Veracity	God speaks the truth and is trustworthy.	1 Sam. 15:29; John 17:17, 19;Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2
Faithfulness	God proves true; he keeps his promises.	Num. 23:19; Ps. 89:2; 1 Thess. 5:24
Personality	God is personal. He has self-cognizance, will, intellect, self-determination.	Exod. 3:14; Gen. 3
Life	God is life and the ultimate source of all of life.	Exod. 3:14; Jer. 10:10; John 5:26
Mercy	God's tenderhearted, showing compassion toward the miserable, needy people he loves and also his not bringing on fallen people what they deserve.	Exod. 3:7, 17; Ps. 103:13; Matt. 9:36
Persistence	God's long-suffering nature and his patience toward his people.	Ps. 86:15; Rom. 2:4; 9:22

26. The Names of God

Names	Meaning/Significance	Scripture Reference
Yahweh/Jehovah	The self-existent One. Some think it emphasizes the ontological nature of God: "I AM WHO I AM"; others believe it sets forth the faithfulness of God: "I am [or will be] who I have been," or "I will be who I will be." This name is the personal and proper name for God.	Exod. 3:14-15; cf. Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 26:25; Exod. 6:3; 7; 20:2; 33:19; 34:5-7; Ps. 68:4; 76:1 ;Jer. 31:31-34
Yahweh Yireh	Yahweh will provide	Gen. 22:8-14
Yahweh Missi	Yahweh is my banner	Exod. 17:15
Yahweh Shalom	Yahweh is peace	Judg. 6:24
Yahweh Sabbaoth	Yahweh of hosts [armies]	1 Sam. 1:3; 17:45; Ps. 24:10; 46:7, 11
Yahweh Maccaddeshem	Yahweh your sanctifier	Exod. 31:13
Yahweh Raah	Yahweh is my shepherd	Ps. 23:1
Yahweh Tsidkenu	Yahweh our righteousness	Jer. 23:6; 33:16
Yahweh El Gemolah	Yahweh God of recompense	Jer. 51:56
Yahweh Nakeh	Yahweh who smites	Ezek. 7:9
Yahweh Shammah	Yahweh who is present	Ezek. 48:35
Yahweh Rapha	Yahweh who heals	Exod. 15:26
Yahweh Elohim	Yahweh, the Mighty One	Judg. 5:3; Isa. 17:6

26. The Names of God **(continued)**

Names	Meaning/Significance	Scripture Reference
Adonai	Lord, Master; the name of God used for Yahweh when the proper name of God came to be thought of as too sacred to pronounce	Exod. 4:10-12; Josh. 7:8-11
Elohim	Mighty One; a plural term for God usually speaking of either his majesty or his plenitude	Gen. 1:1, 26-27; 3:5; 31:13; Deut. 5:9;6:4; Pss. 5:7; 86:15; 100:3
El Elyon	Most High (lit., the strongest Mighty One)	Gen. 14:18; Num. 24:16; Isa. 14:13-14
ElRoi	The Mighty One who sees	Gen. 16:13
El Shaddai	Almighty God or All-Sufficient God	Gen. 17:1-20
El Olam	Everlasting God or God of Eternity	Gen. 21:33; Isa. 40:28
El Elohe Israel	God, the God of Israel	Gen. 33:20
Yeshua	Jesus, Yahweh is Savior or Salvation	Matt. 16:13-16; John 6:42; Acts 2:36; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:11
Christos	Christ, Messiah, the Anointed One	Matt. 16:13-16; John 1:41; 20:31; Acts 2:36; Rom. 6:23; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:11
Kudos	Lord, master, sir	Luke 1:46; Acts 2:36; Jude 4
Soter	Savior; one who delivers from danger and death	Luke 1:47; 2:11
Theos	God, a class noun that can refer to any god or to the one true God; used of the Lord Jesus as true God	Luke 1:47; John 20:28; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:11

21. Doctrine of the Trinity (continued)

The Council of Nicea: A.D, 325

Because of the spread of the Arian heresy, which denied the deity of Christ, the unity and even the future of the Roman Empire seemed uncertain. The newly converted Constantine convened an ecumenical council in Nicea to settle the issue.

The Issue: Was Christ fully God, or was he a created and subordinate being?

Arius	Athanasius
Only God the Father is eternal. The Son had a beginning as the first and highest created being. The Son is not one in essence with the Father. Christ is subordinate to the Father. He is called God as an honorific title.	Christ is co-eternal with the Father, Christ had no beginning. The Son and Father are of the same essence. Christ is not subordinate to the Father.

Crucial Statements of the Council's Creed

[We believe] "in one Lord Jesus Christ . . . true God of true God, not made, of one substance with the Father." "But those who say there was when He was not, and before being begotten He was not. . .these the Catholic Church anathematizes."

"And we believe in the Holy Spirit."

Results from the Council

Arianism was formally condemned. The *homoousia* (same substance) statement created conflicts. Arians reinterpreted *homoousia* and accused the council of modalistic monarchianism. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit was left undeveloped.

21. Doctrine of the Trinity (continued)

The Council of Constantinople: A.D. 381

Arianism was not extinguished at Nicea; it actually grew in prominence. Additionally, Macedonianism emerged, which subordinated the Holy Spirit in much the same manner as Arianism had subordinated Christ.

The Issue: Is the Holy Spirit fully God?

Crucial Statement of the Council's Creed

"... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son."

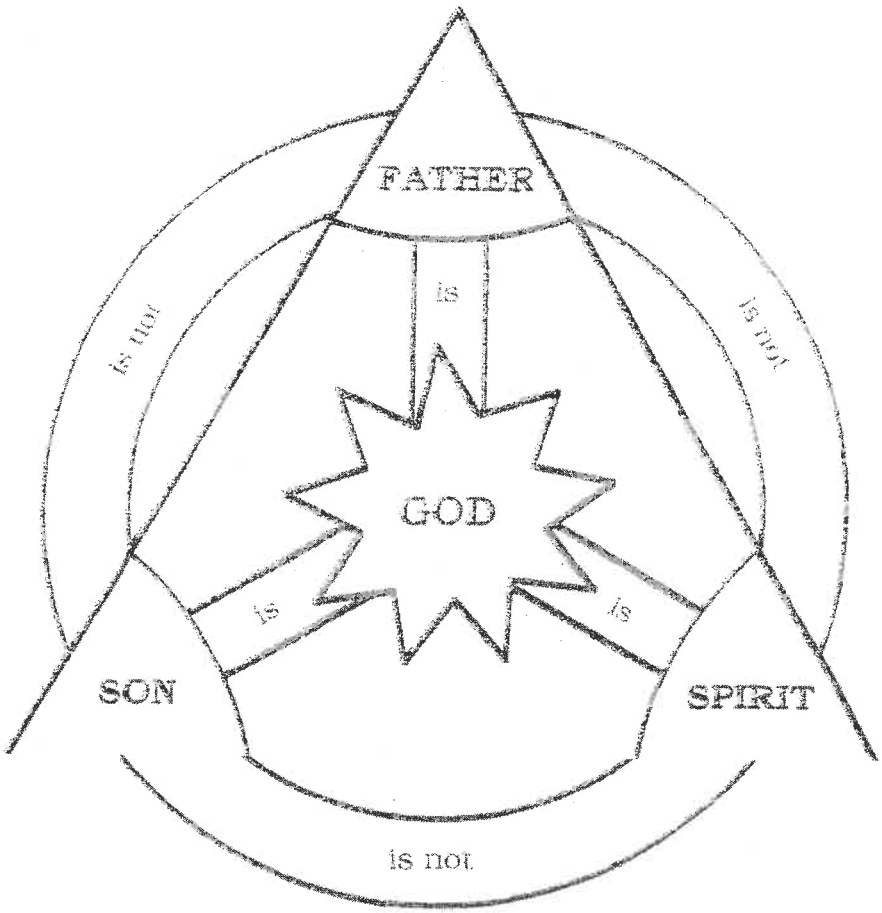
Results from the Council

Arianism was rebuffed and the Nicene Creed reaffirmed.

Macedonianism was condemned and Holy Spirit's deity affirmed.

Major conflicts over Trinitarianism were resolved (though Christological debates continued until Chalcedon, A.D. 451).

22. Ancient Diagram of the Holy Trinity



23. Major Views of the Trinity

View	Source	Adherents	Perception of God's Essence (Oneness-Unity)	Perception of God's Subsistence (Threeness-Diversity)
Dynamic Monarchianism	Theodotus	Paul of Samosata Artemon Socinius Modern Unitarians	The unity of God denotes both oneness of nature and oneness of *person.* The Son and the Holy Spirit therefore are consubstantial with the Father's divine essence only as impersonal *attributes.* The divine *dunamis* came upon the man Jesus, but he was not God in the strict sense of the word.	The notion of a subsistent God is a palpable impossibility, since his perfect unity is perfectly indivisible. The 'diversity' of God is apparent and not real, since the Christ event and the work of the Holy Spirit attest only to a dynamic operation within God, not to a hypostatic union.
Socialistic Monarchianism	Praxeas	Noaetus Sabellius Swedenborg Schleiermacher United Pentecostals (Jesus Only)	The unity of God is ultra-simplex. He is qualitatively characterized in his essence by one nature and one person. This essence may be designated interchangeably as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are different names *for* but identical *with* the unified, simplex God. The three names are the three modes by which God reveals himself.	The concept of a subsistent God is erroneous and confounds the real issue of the phenomenon of God's modalistic manifestation of himself. The paradox of a subsisting "three in oneness" is refuted by recognizing that God is not three persons but one person with three different names and corresponding roles following one another like parts of a drama.

23. Major Views of the Trinity (continued)

View	Source	Adherents	Perception of God's Essence (Oneness-Unity)	Perception of God's Subsistence (Threeness-Diversity)
Subordinationism	Arius	Modern Jehovah's Witnesses and several other lesser known cults	The inherent oneness of God's nature is properly identifiable with the Father only. The Son and the Holy Spirit are discrete entities who do not share the divine essence.	The unipersonal essence of God precludes the concept of divine subsistence with a Godhead. "Threeness in oneness" is self-contradictory and violates the biblical principles of a monotheistic God.
"Economic" Trinitarianism	Hippolytus Tertullian	Various "neo-economic" Trinitarians	The Godhead is characterized by trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations of one identical, indivisible substance. The perfect unity and consubstantiality are especially comprehended in such manifest Triadic deeds as creation and redemption.	Subsistence within the Godhead is articulated by means of such terms as "distinction" and "distribution," dispelling effectively the notion of separateness or division.
Orthodox Trinitarianism	Athanasius	Basil Gregory of Nyssa Gregory of Nazianzus Augustine Thomas Aquinas Luther Calvin Contemporary orthodox Christianity	God's being is perfectly unified and simplex: of one essence *(homoousia)*. This essence of deity is held in common by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons are consubstantial, co inherent *(perichoresis)*, co-equal, and co-eternal.	The divine subsistence is said to occur simultaneously in three modes of being or hypostases. As such, the Godhead exists "undivided in divided persons." This view contemplates an *identity* in nature and *cooperation* in function without the denial of the distinctions of persons in the Godhead.

23. Major Views of the Trinity(continued)

Assignation of Deity/Eternality

View	Father	Son	Holy Spirit	Analogical Referent(s)	Criticism(s)
Dynamic Monarchianism	Unique Originator of the universe. He is eternal, self-existent, and without beginning or end.	A virtuous (but finite) man in whose life God was dynamically present in a unique way; Christ definitely was not deity though his humanity was deified.	An impersonal attribute of the Godhead. Mo deity/or eternality is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.		Elevates reason above the witness of biblical revelation concerning the Trinity. Categorically denies the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, thereby undermining the theological undergirding for the biblical doctrine of salvation.
Modalistic Monarchianism	Fully God and fully eternal as the primal mode or manifestation of the only unique and unitary God.	Full deity/eternality ascribed only in the sense of his being another mode of the one God and identical with his essence. He is the same God manifested in *temporal sequence* specific to a role (incarnation).	Eternal God only as the title designates the *phase* in which the one God, in *temporal sequence, manifested* himself pursuant to the role of regeneration and sanctification.	One person acting three different roles in the same drama. Water-ice-vapor	Depersonalizes the Godhead. To compensate for its Trinitarian deficiencies, this view propounds ideas that are clearly heretical (e.g., patripassianism). Its concept of successive manifestations of the Godhead cannot account for such simultaneous appearances of the three persons as at Christ's baptism.

23. Major Views of the Trinity(continued)

View	Assignation of Deity/Eternality: Father	Son	Holy Spirit	Analogical Referent(s)	Criticism(s)
Subordinationism	The only one, unbegotten God who is eternal and without beginning.	A created being and therefore not eternal. Though he is to be venerated, he is not of the divine essence.	A nonpersonal, noneternal emanation of the Father. He is viewed as an influence, an expression of God. Deity is not ascribed to him.	Mind-idea-action	It is at variance with abundant scriptural testimony respecting the deity of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. Its hierarchical concept likewise asserts three essentially separate persons with regard to the Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. This results in a totally confused soteriology.
"Economic" Trinitarianism	The equal deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is clearly elucidated in observation of the simultaneous relational/operational features of the Godhead. Co-eternality, at times, does not intelligibly surface in this ambiguous view, but it seems to be a logical implication.			A source and its river. Gritty between a root and its shoot. The sun and its light.	Is more tentative and ambiguous in its treatment of the relational aspect of the Trinity.
Orthodox Trinitarianism	In its final distillation, this view unhesitatingly sets forth Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as co-equal and co-eternal in the Godhead with regard to both the divine essence and function.				

24. A Biblical Presentation of the Trinity

Introduction

The word "Trinity" is never used, nor is the doctrine of Trinitarianism ever explicitly taught in the Scriptures, but Trinitarianism is the best explication of the biblical evidence. The theological exposition of the doctrine arose from clear, but not comprehensive, scriptural teaching. It is a crucial doctrine for Christianity because it focuses on who God is, and particularly on the deity of Jesus Christ. Because Trinitarianism is not taught explicitly in the Scriptures, the study of the doctrine is an exercise in putting together biblical themes and data through a systematic theological study and through looking at the historical development of the present orthodox view of what the biblical presentation of the Trinity is.

Essential Elements of the Trinity

1. God is One.
2. Each of the persons within the Godhead is Deity.
3. The oneness of God and the threeness of God are not contradictory.
4. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal.
5. Each of the persons of God is of the same essence and is not inferior or superior to the others in essence.

The Trinity is a mystery which we will never be able to understand fully.

Biblical Teaching	Old Testament	New Testament
God is One	Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one (Deut 6:4; cf. 20:2-3; 3:13-15).	Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen (1 Tim . 1:17; cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; James 2:19).
	The Father: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (Ps. 2:7).	. . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. . (1 Peter 1:2; cf. John 1:17; 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:11)
Three Distinct Persons as Deity	The Son: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (Ps. 2:7; cf. Heb. 1:1-13; Ps. 68:18; Isa. 6:1-3; 9:6).	As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).
	The Holy Spirit: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth .. and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Gen. 1:1-2; cf. Exod. 31:3; Judg. 15:14; Isa. 11:2).	Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit. . . ? You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17).

36. Titles of the Holy Spirit

Title	Emphasis	Citation
One Spirit	His unity	Ephesians 4:4
Seven Spirits	His perfection, omnipresence, and completeness	His perfection, omnipresence, and completeness
The Lord the Spirit	His sovereignty	2 Corinthians 3:18
Eternal Spirit	His eternity	Hebrews 9:14
Spirit of Glory	His glory	1 Peter 4:14
Spirit of Life	His vitality	Romans 8:2
Spirit of Holiness Holy Spirit Holy One	His holiness	Romans 1:4 Matthew 1:20 1 John 2:20
Spirit of Wisdom Spirit of Understanding Spirit of Counsel Spirit of Knowledge	His omniscience, wisdom, and counsel	Isaiah 11:2 cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-13
Spirit of Might	His omnipotence	Isaiah 11:2
Spirit of Fear of the Lord	His reverence	Isaiah 11:2
Spirit of Truth	His truthfulness	John 14:17
Spirit of Grace	His grace	Hebrews 10:29
Spirit of Grace and Supplication	His grace and prayerfulness	Zechariah 12:10

Adapted from Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), p. 250. Used by permission.

37. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

Activity	Description of the Activity	Scripture Reference
Regeneration	Through the ministry of the Spirit a person is born again, receives eternal life, and is renewed.	John 3:3-8; 6:63; Titus 3:5
Indwelling	The Spirit abides in the believer. Without the Spirit's indwelling the person does not belong to Christ.	John 14:17; Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19
Baptizing	Believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit by Christ, uniting them all into one body.	Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13
Sealing	God seals believers with the Holy Spirit, providing a statement of ownership and guarantee of final redemption.	2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; cf. Romans 8:16
Filling	Believers are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit." The filling ministry of the Spirit can be divided into the general feeling relating to spiritual growth and maturation and to special capacities given by the Spirit for special tasks for God.	Ephesians 5:18; cf. Acts 4:8; 4:31; 6:3; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9
Guiding	Believers are commanded to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. The Spirit keeps the believer from enslavement to legalism and also provides discipline and direction for the Christian life.	Galatians 5:16, 25; cf. Acts 8:29; 13:2; 15:7-9; 16:6; Romans 8:14
Empowering	The indwelling Spirit provides victory in the Christian life, development of Christian fruit, and the ability to win against the works of Satan.	Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:17-18, 22-23
Teaching	Jesus promised that when the Spirit came he would lead believers into truth. The Spirit illuminates the mind of the believer to the revelation of God's will through his Word.	John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27

31. The Person of Christ

Preincarnate

Existed Eternally Before Creation

From the "beginning" (John1:1; 1 John 1:1)

"With God" (John 1:1-2)

"Before the world was" (John 17:5) The Word "became flesh" [implies a preincarnate existence, John 1:14).

Participated in Creation

"Let us make man" (Gen.1:26).

The "craftsman" (Prov. 8:30)

The "firstborn over all creation"(Col. 1:15)

All things were created through him" (John 1:3;Col. 1:16).

World created "through him"(John 1:10; 1 Cor. 8:6)

All things created "for him"(Col. 1:16).

All things hold together "in him" (Col. 1:17).

Manifested Himself After Creation (Old Testament)

As "Yahweh" To Abraham (Gen. 18)
In judgment (Gen. 19)
In promise (Hos. 1:7)
As the "angel of Yahweh" To Hagar (Gen. 16)
To Abraham (Gen. 22)
To Jacob (Gen. 31)
To Moses (Exod. 3:2)
To Israel (Exod. 14:19)
To Balaam (Num. 22:22) To Gideon (Judg. 6)

Divine Nature

Attributes

He is eternal (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5). He is omnipresent (Matt 28:20; Eph.1:23).

He is omniscient (John 16:30; 21:17). He is omnipotent (John 5:19)

He is immutable (Heb. 1:12; 13:8)

Possesses Divine Offices

He is Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). He is sustainer (Col. 1:17).

Possesses Divine Prerogatives

He forgives sin (Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:47). He raises the dead (John 5:25;11:25).

He executes judgment (John 5:22).

He Is Identified With the Old Testament Yahweh

"I AM" (John 8:58). Seen by Isaiah (John 12:41; 8:24, 50-58)

Possesses Divine Names

"Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. 22:13) "I AM" (John 8:58) "

Immanuel" (Matt 1:22) "Son of Man" (Matt. 9:6; 12:8) "Lord" (Matt 7:21; Luke 1:43) "Son of God" (John 10:36) "God" (John 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1)

Possesses Divine Relations

The expressed image of God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3) He is one with the Father (JohrlO:31).

Accepts Divine Worship

(Matt. 14:33; 28:9; John 20:28-29)

Claims Himself to be God

(John 8:58; 10:30;17:5)

31. The Person of Christ (continued)

Human Nature

Had a Human Birth
He was born of a virgin (Matt 1:18-2:11; Luke 1:30-38).

Had a Human Development
He continued to grow and become strong (Luke 2:50, 52).

Had the Essential Elements of Human Nature
Human body (Matt. 26:12;
John 2:21) Reason and will (Matt. 26:38;
Mark. 2:8)

Had Human Names
Jesus (Matt. 1:21)
Son of Man (Matt. 8:20; 11:18)
Son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1)

Had the Sinless Infirmities of Human Nature
He become weary (John 4:6).
He become hungry (Matt. 4:2;21:18).
He became thirsty (John 19:28). He was tempted (Matt. 4; Heb.2:18).

Was Repeatedly Called a Man
(John 1:30; 4:9; 10:38)

Union of Natures

Theanthropic
The person of Christ is theanthropic; he has two natures (divine and human in one person).

Personal
Hypostatic union, constituting one personal substance; two natures; one person.

Includes the Human and Divine Qualities and Acts
Both the human and divine qualities and acts may be ascribed to Jesus Christ under either of his natures.

Constant Presence of Both Humanity and Divinity
His natures cannot be separated.

Character

Absolutely Holy
His human nature was created holy (Lukel:35)
He committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22).
He always pleased the Father (John 8:29).

Possesses Genuine Love
He laid down his life (John 15:13). His love surpasses all knowledge

Truly Humble
He took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:5-8).

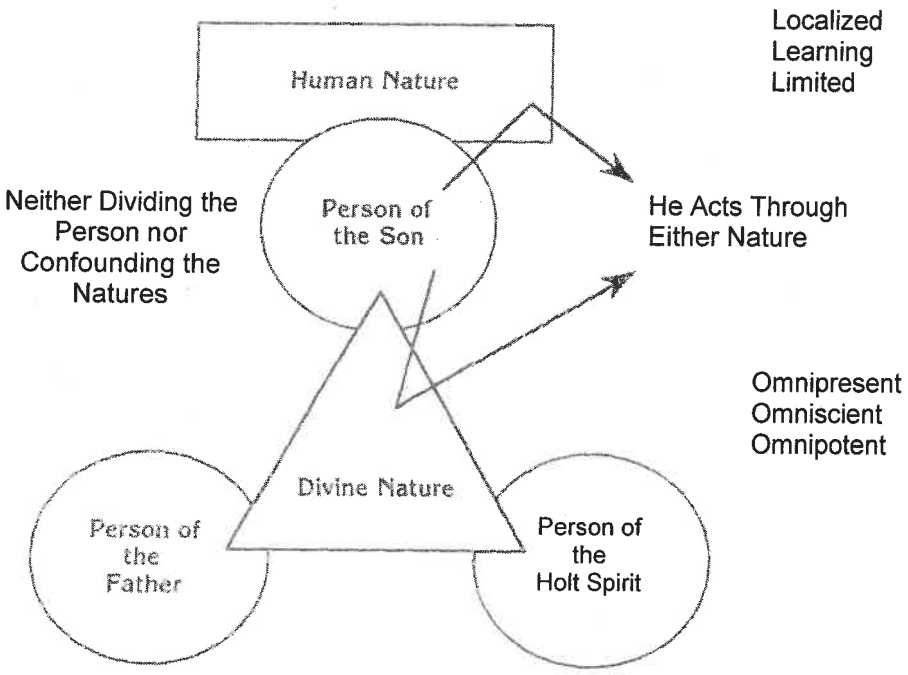
Thoroughly Meek
(Matt. 11:29)

Perfectly Balanced
He was grave without being melancholy. He was joyful without being frivolous.

Lived a Life of Prayer
(Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12)

An Incessant Worker
He worked the works of his Father (John. 5:17; 9:4).

29. The Union of Deity and Humanity in the Person of the Son



33. The Peccability versus Impeccability of Christ

	Peccability	Impeccability
Definition	Christ could sin.	Christ could not sin.
Key Phrase	Able not to sin *(Potuit non peccare)*	Not able to sin (/Von *potuit peccare)*
Hebrews 4:15	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, yet he did not commit sin (sin is seen in its result). Real temptation admits the possibility of succumbing to the temptation.	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, but he did not have a sin nature (sin is seen as nature, or state of existence).
Question of True Humanity or True Deity	If Jesus could not sin, how could he be truly human?	If Jesus could sin, how could he be truly divine?
Points of Agreement	Christ's temptations were real (Heb. 4:15). Christ experienced struggle (Matt. 26:36-46). Christ did not sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; James 5:6; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18;1 John 3:5).	
	For Peccability	**Against Peccability**
Logical Argumentation for and Against Peccability	If Christ could be tempted, then he could have sinned. Peccability is a necessary deduction from temptability. Temptation implies the possibility of sin.	Temptability does not imply susceptibility. Just because an army can be attacked does not mean that it can be conquered. This also proceeds from the false assumption that what applies to us also applies necessarily to Christ
	If Christ was not able to sin, then the temptation was not real and he cannot sympathize with his people.	Although Christ's temptations are not always exactly parallel to our own, he was tried through his human nature as we are. However, he had no sin nature and he was a divine person also.
	If Christ is impeccable, then his temptations were slight.	Christ's temptations were in every way like ours except that they did not originate in evil forbidden desires. He was tempted from without, not from within.
	If Christ could not sin, then he had no free will.	Christ manifested his free will by not sinning. Christ was free to do the will of the Father. Being of one will with the Father, he was not free to go against that will.

47. The Dimensions of the *Imago Dei*

The image of God in man has been marred but not erased

(Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9).

Rational Dimension

Man was given responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:4-9).

Adam was commanded to take care of the garden

Adam named the animals (Gen. 19-20).

Adam recognized that the woman was a helper suitable for him (Gen. 2:22-24; cf. 2:20).

Spiritual Dimension

Adam and Eve had fellowship with God (Gen. 3:8).

Adam and Eve feared God after their sin (Gen. 3:10).

Moral Dimension

God gave Adam and Eve a moral command (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve had a sense of moral rectitude (Gen. 2:25).

Adam and Eve experienced guilt following their transgression (Gen. 3:7).

This seems to indicate that the image included original righteousness (Gen. l:31;Eccles. 7:29).

Social Dimension

Adam and Eve conversed with each other [presumably] (Gen. 2:18, 23; 3:6-8; 4:1).

48. Views on the Nature of the *Imago Dei*

Viewpoint	Support	Problems
Substantive View The image of God consists in a definite physical, psychological, and/or spiritual characteristic within the nature of man.	Image *(tselem)* in Genesis 1:26 can be translated "statue;" hence, the passage may read, "Let us make man to look like us." In John 1:14-18 (and elsewhere) it is made clear that Jesus was God and that he had a human body.	This view defines God by defining man. God is spirit (see John 4:24). In what way, then, does our physical body represent God? Also, birds and other animals have bodies and are not said to have been made in the image of God (see Gen. 1:20-23).
Functional View The image of God consists in what man does.	Genesis 1:26-28 clearly says that man is to rule or have dominion over the rest of creation. God clearly rules.	Genesis 1:27 indicates that God created man in his image before he gave man dominion. Therefore the *Imago Dei* may be other than the capacity for dominion.
Relational View Only when we have faith in (i.e., "interact with") Jesus Christ do we fully possess the image of God.	God created "man" male and female (Gen. 1:26-27), indicating the relational aspect of God in humankind. Also Exodus 20; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:26-27 suggest the relational dimensions of God and humankind. The entire Word of God records God's relational nature.	Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 make it clear that unregenerate man has also been created in the image of God.
Reformed View The image of God in man is man's conscious propensities and man's true knowledge. Part of the image of God in man (i.e., his "natural image") is obscured, but not destroyed by sin; and part of God's "moral image" is lost to man as the result of sin but is restored by Christ.	Part of the image of God in man is man's spiritual, moral, and immortal being, which has been "defaced but not erased." (See Gen. 8:15-9:7; Ps. 8:4-9; 1 Cor. 11:7; 15:49; James 3:9; Heb. 2:5-8.) Man's knowledge of righteousness and holiness is lost because of sin and restored by Christ. (See Eph. 4:22-25; Col. 3:9-10.) God is conscious and possesses true knowledge.	Genesis 1:26-28 does not refer to divisions of the image of God; rather it speaks of a single image of God.

49. Theories of Original Righteousness

Viewpoint	Viewpoint
Pelagian	There is free will; there is no such thing as original righteousness. "Man was endowed with reason, so that he could know God; with free will, so that he was able to choose and do the good; and with the necessary power to rule the lower creation." "All good and evil, by which we are praised or blameworthy, does not originate together with us, but is done by us. We are born capable of each, but not filled with either. And so we are produced without virtue, so are we also without vice; and before the action of his own will, there is in man only what God made."
Thomas Aquinas	Righteousness is a gift added after man's creation. Primitive holiness was purely a supernatural endowment or gift. As such it must be extraneous to the nature of Adam and conferred subsequently to his completed creation. "God formed man out of the clay . . . But as to his soul, he formed him after his own image and likeness. . . . Then he added the admirable gift of original righteousness. . . ."
Augustinian	Righteousness is part of the original human nature. It was in intrinsic quality of the nature of man. By the divine creative act man was constituted holy, and there was not only no subsequent act, but also no separate act by which he was so constituted. That nature was so constituted as to be responsive to the claims of a prudent and good life, not in the sense of a necessary fulfillment of such claims, but in the sense of a spontaneous inclination or disposition toward such fulfillment.

50. Theories of Original Sin

Viewpoint	Argument
Pelagianism	Man's soul is created by God (each individual near or at birth). Man's soul is created without corruption. The influence of Adam's sin is that of an example. Man has free volition. God's grace is universal since all men have free will; adults may obtain forgiveness through baptism. Thus, Adam's sin does not directly affect others, there is no such thing as original sin, and man is not depraved. Since man is not born in sin, it is possible for him to be preserved and to never need salvation.
Arminianism	Man receives from Adam a corrupted nature but does not receive Adam's guilt. This nature is corrupted physically and intellectually, but not volitionally. Prevenient grace enables man to believe. Thus, man is not totally depraved, but still retains the volition to seek God.
Calvinism	Each individual is related to Adam. There are two primary views: *Federal Headship* (creationist view of origin of the soul) The individual receives the physical nature from parents. God creates each soul. Adam was our representative, as ordained by God. This representation parallels man's being in Christ unto righteousness *Natural Headship* (traducianist view of origin of soul—Augustine) The individual receives the physical nature and the soul from the parents. Thus, all people were present in Adam in germinal or seminal form. Each individual participates in the sin of Adam. Thus, each individual inherits Adam's sin.

51. The Imputation of Adam's Sin

Key passage: Romans 5:12-21

Distinguishing the Views

The Example View
Adam's sin was a minor act of disobedience that affected only himself. Romans 5:12d refers to the actual personal sins of individuals who followed Adam's example, committed sins, and are thus guilty before God.

The Solidarity View
A solidarity exists between Adam and his race such that Paul can say that one sinned (cf. 5:13-19) and at the same time say that all sinned (cf. 5:12). Both statements refer to the Fall.

Seminalism
The union between Adam and his posterity is biological and genetic such that Adam embodied all human beings in a single collective entity and thus all people are co-sinners with Adam.

Federalism
The union between Adam and his posterity is due to the fact that God appointed him as the representative head of the human race. What Adam did is charged to his posterity.

Mediate (Indirect) Imputation
People have a corrupt nature imputed to them--the effect of Adam's sin. Thus hereditary depravity is imputed. All sinned because all have inherited natural corruption from Adam.

Immediate (Direct) Imputation
Adam's first sin was imputed to every person. All people were tried in Adam our representative and declared guilty.

APPENDIX G

THEOLOGY OF PREACHING

Theology of Preaching

Preaching is a proclamation that applies sacred scriptures to the needs of humankind. Preaching is a method used by God to deliver encouragement, enlightenment, and illumination and sometimes even explanations to the dilemmas of life. Above all, preaching applies divine love to the pressing needs of people.

Preaching is to be more than a skilled oratorical exercise. Preaching is more than lecture, more than a recitation and more than a melodramatic performance. It may be any of these things, but it must also be a divine message that takes into account the needs of the intended audience and seek to build a bridge between our problems and God's solution. In the classic text, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet*, Samuel Proctor states that preaching is a different from all other "platform performances and verbal expressions." Preaching is unique in that it is the distinctive proclamation that places the truth of God upon our human conditions.

Personal encounters, professors and literature have shaped my theology of preaching. As a child I considered the time of the sermon as the time to crawl up in the pew and take a nap. Most adults in my church encouraged the youngsters to go to sleep in an effort to ensure that we remained and quiet during the preaching moment. As I grew older, I realized that the sermon was important to the church experience but I regarded it as something that must be endured. I could not find a reason to remain attentive during the preachment because I could never find any correlation between my life and the preacher's words. As a young adult finding myself back in church after many years away, I joined a church with a dynamic pastor. Each week, it was as if the pastor, Rev. Darryl Scott, had appointed a private detective to follow me around and take notes of my actions and thoughts. I became astonished at the preacher's ability to be used of God to speak a

message that was so relevant to my life, and judging from the response of other parishioners, pertinent to their lives as well. Pastor Scott's preaching has inspired me to seek to understand the socio-cultural context of the intended audience so that I too can speak to the collective and individual concerns of the people during the preaching moment.

Preparation for preaching begins in God's presence. The preacher must seriously consider the call that Jesus gave to the disciples to first come to Him before they were commissioned with power and authority to go forth *for* Him in ministry (Luke 4:13, Matthew 10:1 Mark 3: 13). Spending time in the presence of God in prayer, meditation and disciplined study is where the sacred proclamation begins. While in seminary, my systematic theology professor began each lecture by sharing snippets from his morning devotions with the class. Dean John Kinney's fifteen to thirty minute morning devotions produced deep theological insights. I would always think to myself, "you call that a devotion, I call that a revival." Time with the Divine will inform, enlighten and empower the preacher for the sacred task of preaching. It is the preacher's responsibility to spend time soaking in the Divine Presence to the point that he or she becomes so saturated with God's word that they can apply the love of God to their own needs with enough left over to lavish upon the listeners at the appointed preaching moment.

This time with God will also allow the preacher to receive instruction and direction about issues and concerns in their own lives. Someone who has tested the product that one peddles will proclaim the message that will eventually be preached. The time spent in prayer preparation will also help to ensure that the Word coming forth is indeed the message from the Lord. Developing a spiritual discipline of prayer, meditation and study will also help the audience to see that the preacher does indeed live the life that they preach about. Dean Kinney tells a story of a woman who badly needed a drink of

water but was unwilling to take a sip of life giving water, because it was presented to her in a dirt laden cup. She couldn't get past the filth on the vessel used to transport the life source. So, it is with the preacher. The preacher's life should espouse the truths of the scriptures that they proclaim.

The late Dr. Miles Jones, my first year homiletics professor at Virginia Union University, taught that the definition of a sermon is "a statement of faith, drawn from the context of the biblical tradition that projects the authentic being of the preacher." In the era of twenty-four hour Christian television, there are many preaching giants and midgets with television broadcasts that one might emulate and/or imitate. Dr. Jones taught that the preacher has received Godly authorization to be himself/herself only. It is essential that the preacher preach from the wellsprings of their own existence, life experiences and God centered moments. Dr. Jones also asserted that the sermon should address the "conditions of existence" that are common to all humanity. The African American preacher is unique in that he inherently shares and identifies with the condition of life that is existent in the African American congregation in the book, *Black Preaching: the Recovery of a Powerful Art,* author Henry Mitchell indicates that preaching at it best is a partnership. The preacher, the congregation and God share in the creation of the unique homiletic moment. God is faithful to provide the distinctive message for the people if the preacher spends time in preparation. The preaching audience is the third partner because it is their conditions of existence that will be addressed by the message. When the message emanates from the presence of the divine we can be assured that the word for the moment will be exactly what the people need. The audience wants to know what God has to say about their life situations.

In *The Heart of Black Preaching*, Cleophus LaRue states that the core of powerful black preaching is a biblical hermeneutic that sees God as sovereign and powerful and able to do great and mighty things on behalf of those who are under oppression. Proctor has stated "preaching at its best keeps the congregation aware of God's love, God's presence and God's power." The breadth of the experiences of the people should be taken into account and the preacher should be careful to proclaim what Moyd calls "the whole counsel of God." The whole plan and will of God must be preached as revealed in scripture in human history in the church and in the social context of the African American experience. LaRue explains that the preaching moment should span over a domain of experience of the listener. He lists the five broad domains of experience as: personal piety, care of the soul, social justice, corporate concerns and maintenance of the institutional church. Sermons concerned with the "personal piety, morality or the "thou shall nots" of the congregation are too often lifted up as the major focus of preaching moments. It is as if preachers would have persons live so holy that they have no interaction with the world. Other preachers spend most Sundays in the proclamation of messages that are centered on the social justice issues of the day without addressing more germane concerns. I have leaned toward the preachment of sermons in the domain of "care of the soul." Messages in this domain are focused on the well being of individuals. These proclamations will be centered the contemporary needs on the helping persons face their daily challenges by giving them a message of hope designed to bring healing, guidance and sustaining strength. It should help them to learn to "be" even in the face of overwhelming obstacles and struggles. It will lead them to a course of action for their particular concerns.

The true aim of preaching is to call the hearer to action. The action may be an increase in faith, an elevation of hope, a change of habits, repentance or accepting salvation. *In The Sacred Art: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition*, Olin P. Moyd shares that preaching should be designed to bring forth action and to take a "hearing" and turn it into "happening." The listener should leave the preaching moment not just recalling a new set of facts, but asking what action they should now take as a result of those facts.

In the African American tradition, the listener will generally let the preacher know when they have touched on matters that are of utmost importance to them on that particular moment. Through the "call" and "response," the preacher and the parishioner will find reason to celebrate as they rejoice in the knowledge that God has the answer to their dilemmas and share in God's appropriation of that answer into their individual circumstances.

The preacher should be mindful that the preaching moment is not about popularity and monetary gain, but about being faithful to God and the message. It is a God ordained and God authorized activity and as such the preacher is accountable to God for the manner in which the activity is carried out. Woe unto me if I do not preach the Gospel.

APPENDIX H

THEOLOGY OF PROPHETIC PREACHING

Theology of Prophetic Preaching

Preaching is a proclamation that applies sacred scriptures to the needs of humankind. Preaching is a method used by God to deliver encouragement, enlightenment and illumination and sometimes even explanations to human dilemmas of life. Above all, preaching must apply divine love to the pressing needs of people. Prophetic preaching carries the same mandate but takes on the added dimension of challenging the political and social injustices of the contemporary society. To preach prophetically is to preach under the authority of the Holy Spirit whose anointing or enabling ability provides revelatory meaning to the current issues and aids the preacher in advocating appropriate action to handle those concerns.

Being a prophetic preacher means more than to foretell or forth tell, but rather it means being a mouthpiece for God to the world. Deuteronomy 18: 14 –18 says, "the Lord will raise up a prophet like me. I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him." T. Austin Sparks in *Prophetic Ministry* says that the prophetic is more than the predictive element and stands as the ministry of spiritual interpretation. The prophetic preacher must bring the God element to bear on every concern.

In order for preaching to truly be prophetic, it is imperative that it be a word from God. This word can only be received through the spending time in the presence of God. One who will receive is one who is willing to spend time in disciplined prayer, study and meditation. Revelation means that one has received the Divine "spin" on the contemporary concern and articulates what God's intended action is in that regard. Hindsight will tell you what *was* wrong, but revelation will expose what *is* wrong. When the twenty-first century citizen glances in the rear view mirror and with a reflective eye agrees that pass racial injustices were wrong, they are using "hindsight."When Martin Luther King made this pronouncement forty years ago, in the midst of a society that affirmed the practice; that was prophetic.

The prophetic preachment will challenge societal norms. It is important that the proclamation not be pronounced simply for shock value, but its aim should be to make one uncomfortable remaining in the same state after hearing new information. It has been said that ignorance is bliss. The prophetic preachment seeks to remove the ignorance excuse and encourage persons to take action in light of the information that they have obtained. Phillip Wogaman in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World* asserts that prophetic preaching should expose the hearer to the conflict between their faith and practice." In *Unleashing the Word* by Adam Hamilton, it is stated that prophetic preaching should do more than make a position known; it should be influential in having people alter their views when they realize that they are in conflict with the scriptures.

Prophetic preaching must go beyond simply issuing a diagnosis of societal ills and propose the action that will bring reconciliation between the actual state and God's intended. Micah 6:8 says, "…do justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." Justice is not just to be dreamed or spoken, but justice is to be done. To do justice is a call for action. Prophetic preaching likewise is a call to action.

The African American church in the twenty-first century has an opportunity to influence the world as prophetic preaching comes forth from her pulpits. The person who would desire to preach prophetically must now take up the mantle and boldly proclaim what thus says the Lord.

APPENDIX I

SERMONS

SERMON #1

Prophetic Sermon

Get Your Inheritance

Numbers 27: 1-11

This story today may not be familiar to all, but it is a story of five brave women who stood together in the face of adversity and challenge and made a stand on the promises of God. These daughters of Zelophehad were a part of the lineage of Joseph, descendants of one of Joseph's two sons, Manasseh. Their father had died while they were in the wilderness, traveling to the Land of Promise. In Numbers Chapter 26, God has once again commanded Moses to take a census of the people… now some 40 years since the last census. Some forty years and an entire generation has died in the wilderness, but those that remain are about to enter into what God has promised.

These ladies are living in a patriarchal society, meaning it is a society ruled and governed by men. When this census is taken there is no interest in counting the number of women who were among them. In Numbers 26, Moses gives the command to take the census of men twenty years old or more and are those who able to serve in the army of Israel.

When the count began, no one bothered to count the women and children. In other words they did not count. They did not matter. This reminds us of the occasion when Jesus fed the crowd of five thousand in the New Testament (Mt. 14: 13-21). The text records that the disciples fed 5000 beside the women and children. Again, the women and children were not regarded as important enough to count them. The daughters lived in a society where women did not count. They lived in a society where they were seen as irrelevant, unnoticed, overlooked, and disregarded. A place where major decisions were made and they were not invited to the table. Battles were won and their what they thought was the fight was never mentioned. Decisions were made about where to place the trash heap, but no one considered the impact it would have on them. Laws were passed and no one considered how it might impact their neighborhoods. They were seen as the minorities, whose opinions were not important and whose situation in life was irrelevant to the majority. They were those who should just accept things as they were and go on with life.

But I'm so glad today, that these five women got together and decided that they were not going out like that. They decided that somebody had to say something, and there comes a time when you realize that no one speaks for you better than yourself. There comes a time when you realize that those that have, are not really that interested in you having. It's not that they don't care; it's just that it is not on their radar screen. It's not that it is not important. It just isn't relevant to their lives. Oh, you mean that there are

children going to bed at night hungry, I didn't know that- I have plenty to eat. You mean that more black males are still going to prison than white males, Oh I thought that had improved. What HIV and Aids is still on the rise that highest level of new HIV and Aids cases in the state of Virginia is among African American women. That 77% of all new cases of HIV and aids among women are among African American women. What more African Americans are unemployed than other racial groups. Oh, I didn't know that. But these women understood that they found themselves in a predicament where no one else was really that concerned and they knew that they had to say something. And so they teach us something s about dealing with life's issues while holding on to the promises of God.

The first thing they teach us is that:

You've got to know what you are entitled to- KNOW- The televangelist Joel Osteen starts his weekly broadcast with a statement, "This is my bible, I am what it says I am, I can have what it says I can have." God's word is full of things that you can have. God's word is full of promises. These women knew that God was a God of promises. They knew that God had promised to distribute land to the tribes once they arrived in Canaan, the Promised Land. But the land was only supposed to be passed down to the heirs that were male. These five ladies just didn't think that was right. They came to Moses and asked why their father should not have an inheritance just because he had died a natural death in the desert. They stressed that God had promised an inheritance to their father and although they were female, they were rightful heirs of their father. They believed that they should have something coming to the. You have to know that as a child of the Father, you also have some things coming to you. You have some things that belong to you. God has promised peace that surpasses understanding if you keep your mind on the Father. You have some healing coming to you in the name of the Father. You have some bread when you are hungry and some water when you are thirsty, coming in the name of the Father. God promises to be your protector and your provider. God's children have the promise of a front guard and a rear guard. God's children have a shepherd to watch over them. You have some desires of your heart coming if you keep your mind on your Father.

They also teach us:

Faith without works is dead- GO- The daughters could have just sat around and complained about how unjust it was, how bad it was and made no claim on what they believed. The land would have simply reverted to some male descendant and they would have been at the mercy of somebody else to take care of them for the rest of their lives. The word of God tells us that we can have whatever you say. What will you say? God said that if you ask anything in the name of the Father, you can have it. In his name implies according to the will of God and God's principles? What will you say? These women exhibited great courage and conviction. They approached Moses and Eleazar the priest at the Tent of the meeting and began to "say"! This was the place where God met with his people. It was here that people before them had died for coming to the tent with the wrong motive. It was here, at the door the Supreme Court of the land that these

women took their case. They approached boldly... as Hebrews 4:16 declares, they went boldly before the throne of grace that they might obtain mercy. They came boldly standing on the fact that they knew a God who did not discount anybody and they served a God who was concerned with every situation in their lives. Move on the Word that God has given you. You can spend your time learning the Word of God, quoting the word of God and singing the word of God, but at some point you are going to be required to move on what you know. If you believe that you can walk on water, you are going to have to get out of the boat. If you believe that God will set you free, you are going to have to go face Pharaoh. If you believe you will have a promised land, you are going to have to face some Hittites, Jebusites and a few Negroites. If you believe that God can take care of you, you might have to go through a Nor'easter or an unexpected blizzard every now and then. If you believe that He will fight your battles, you are going to have to get in the ring sometimes. Faith is an action word.

They teach us to:

Speak in faith- Speak- The Bible records that they went before the Supreme Court of the land. They were not cowering and crying, planning a sit in or staging a protest. They went boldly and *made a request*. I know that God sees my crying because He is a compassionate God, but God tells me that I can have what I say, not what I cry about. I can have what I say, not what I march about or pout about or complain about or gossip about. These five women came together and stood in faith and asked for their inheritance because God said they were entitled to it. They felt confident in reaffirming that God wanted their father to have an inheritance. The daughters were engaged in faith talk, because as of this moment in time, the land was only promised. They did not know what it looked like; they did not know the specifics. But they believed in a God who had promised them something. They made a claim on that promise while they were still in the wilderness. They are still in the wilderness and cannot see anything but they are going on God's promise. You might find yourself in a similar situation. You cannot see the job, but God promised it. You should just begin to speak what God said. They stood in faith and the Bible records that upon their asking, Moses took their request before the Lord. And God said," the daughters of Zelophehad are right. They can have just what they have believed me for."

And what I like about this passage is that in the end, the five women got the land, but they did not just change things for themselves. They changed things for women in their society as well. Because they were willing to stand together in unity and seek God for the things that God had promised, any other disadvantaged and minority people caught in this situation, would benefit as well. You have to know that it is not always about you. Everything that God has promised is not just about your four and no more. Because they were *willing* to stand and be bold and courageous and advocate for justice, they now made a difference for the entire Israelite nation. By just being willing to say "no" to the "normal" they made a difference in the lives of many. The law was amended that day as Moses announced God's decision, that *the daughters were right.*

Our challenge today is to know what God has promised for us, stand on that word,

move in faith and continue to speak in faith. In our faith stand, may we realize that what God wants to accomplish through us is really not all about us after all. Much like Jesus who came to earth and lived and died, Jesus knew that his work was not just about him. He knew that the Father had made some promises of a Savior. Jesus came to do the will of his Father. Because he knew that it was God's will for him to suffer, He stood in the face of adversity. He stood boldly before his accusers. He stood boldly before the injustices of the courts. He stood and He spoke. Knowing that His Father had promised him a seat at his right side, Jesus spoke, "not my will but thine be done" , Knowing that this was all a part of God's plan, He spoke-"Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

And he did it all, not so that he alone would get the victory
He did it all, not so that he alone would be elevated,
He did it all not so that he could get back to his heavenly home
But he did it, because he was an advocate for you and for me.
He stood for you.
He spoke for you.
He died for you
He rose for you.
And because he lives . . . I can face tomorrow
Because he lives all fear is gone
Because he lives . . . life is worth living because he lives.

SERMON # 2

Prophetic Sermon

The Power to Make a Difference

Jeremiah 38: 1-13

People who keep statistics on such things indicate that this week is the week when the great promises and resolutions that we made at the beginning of the year are broken. We had decided that we would lose weight and then the Valentine's Day candy came along we could not resist. We resolved to save money and then our 401k statement came in the mail and we only felt worse. We decided this was the year that we would save or this was the year we would get a better job and then it looks like everybody is in line for a bailout except us. The fact of the matter is that though we may fall into a rut every now and then, we should not give up on our ideals of improving our situations. We should keep an attitude of striving to be our personal best. We should maintain an outlook which is summed up in the Philippians verse which declares, "forgetting those things which lie behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I would like to submit to you today, that when you sit down to review your progress, that along with the other criterion that you have developed to measure your success in life you would add to those criterion one additional question. How has my life made a difference in the lives of others? Most of us are familiar with the story of George and "It's a Wonderful Life" or the "Scrooge and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future." In these stories, the characters had the opportunity to be shown just how their communities and families would be different had they never been born. You and I will not experience the make believe of "It's a Wonderful Life," but I believe that the premise of its story can be used effectively by us to examine our impact and influence we are having upon our families, our communities and our world.

In our text today, we read a story about the prophet Jeremiah, a prophet who is known to have made a difference in the history of the nation.

Jeremiah came to be known as the weeping prophet, because of his crying over the judgments that God spoke against his people. Many of you know Jeremiah from the passage that quotes Jeremiah as saying that if he could not stop speaking the words of the Lord because it felt as if his heart was on fire and the word of God was like a fire shut up in his bones.

The thing about Jeremiah is that he boldly obeyed the word of the Lord and spoke that which he was given to speak. He did this without much concern for his own life.

- The background of this story is that Jerusalem was at war with the Babylonians. Jeremiah gave a prophesy to King Zedekiah that the Babylonians would surely capture Jerusalem. Now, nobody wants to hear that they are going to be defeated.

We will go all over town to hear a prophet tell us that riches are coming our way, but we get mad when the preacher stands and preaches the unadulterated word of God and tell us that the way to "have more" *is to* "give more." We may not want to hear the word exposes that if we don't straighten up that God is going to release judgment on us. This is the type of word that Jeremiah was giving to Zedekiah. He was telling him that God would use Judah's enemies to rid the land of idolatry. Zedekiah wanted a cheap grace. He wanted to reign but he did not want to face any suffering. If you will reign with me, you must suffer with me.

- But Jeremiah did not change his message, because the people didn't like it. He spoke what God said speak in spite of their opinions and the potential danger for doing so.

Jeremiah is in effect sentenced to death. Pashur and the boys, the counselors to the king use their influence to have him sentenced to death. But the boys are not willing to kill him themselves. Instead they create a circumstance that will have the same result, but they won't be the one ultimately causing it to happen. They will instead just lower the prophet into a cistern and wait for him to die. Jeremiah finds himself lowered into a cistern. This cistern in this day was used to store water. Water is a precious commodity in this part of the world and this cistern had been emptied of any water.

Within this cistern, there was only mud. One commentator, said that the mud was so deep that it came up to Jeremiahs neck while others think it was perhaps only around his knees. But regardless of how high it was, Jeremiah was low down in a deep hole and he was covered with mud. Does anybody know how Jeremiah must have felt? Here he was, through no fault of his own, in a place where mud was his only covering. Jeremiah had been obedient to the Lord and did everything that God had commanded him and yet he finds himself all down in the mud. All his accomplishments were smeared with mud. If he tried to move, there was nothing but mud everywhere he looked. His good deeds were being evil spoken of. If he looked down, more mud, and if he looked up, he was reminded of how low he was. He was muddied, for righteousness sake. And don't think that this is strange. Remember that John the Baptist spoke out against Herod's adultery, and he was beheaded. Elijah spoke against Baals prophets and he was persecuted by Jezebel. Stephen was stoned for preaching the gospel. Paul, Mandela and Martin were persecuted, beaten and jailed for the sake of the gospel. Like this great prophet of the Lord, there are times when we find ourselves in situations where we cannot lift ourselves.

There have been times in my life when I needed someone to do for me, what I could not do for myself. Times when I could look around and all I could see was trouble and distress and difficulty. But just as importantly, there have been times in my life when I have surveyed my surroundings to discover that I was doing Ok, but there were those around me who needed some help. It is important to realize that in this Christian journey,

sometimes we will find ourselves on top of the mountain, but at other times we may be casting a glance from the valley low. And so assuredly, all of us can identify with Jeremiah the prophet, but I would suggest to you that there is another hero in the text and his name is Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian servant.

Ebed-melech, whose name means servant of the King, is the person who found himself in a place with the power to make a difference. A servant with no money and no prestige, yet he had the power to make a difference in the life of the prophet Jeremiah. Many of us could not imagine being a mouthpiece to the nation, or standing and exclaiming God's word to thousands, but we can identify with this servant. We must understand that we have much influence and power to make a difference right where we are. We have to understand, that it is not just the preacher and the president who can make a difference, it is not just the director and the deacon, not the governor and the mayor – but the butler and the bus driver are positioned to make a difference, the "baller" and the barber, the captain and the cashier, the daycare provider and the dump truck driver, the kindergarten teacher and the mall shopkeeper. WE can all make a difference. It is you and I, everyday, ordinary people, strategically positioned and purposed by God who have the power to make a difference in the world around us.

Ebed-melech shows us that it does not take a high position or a great name, making a difference will not require abundant riches or high society.

It will take a willingness and awareness. It will mean that you will have to take assessment of your surroundings and you will have to be less self-centered and become focused on those around you. The bible says that people will recognize that we are disciple because of the love we have for one another. I believe that God is calling us to show love to one another. For too long our emphasis has been on Bless me and mine. Give me all you can. I believe it is time to look to what we can do for those that are around us and that are coming behind us. Who can you teach with the lessons that you have gained? Who would benefit from what you have endured? Who can you mentor? Who can you help avoid the same mistakes that you made? Who can you reach back for and bring them where you are? Unfortunately, too often we are afraid to help someone else up, because we think they will take from us. But God is a limitless God; there is no limit to God's love, mercy, and riches. **If we are going to make a difference in the lives of others we are going to have to do a few things.**

We must learn to take advantage of our places of access.

1. Access- If we are going to make a difference we must be willing to take advantage of our places of access. What this means is that you will be some places that I will never be. You have access to some locations that are off limits to me. If I come to your house, in order to enter, I will have to ring the bell and be asked to come in. When you go to your house, you take the key and turn the key and go on in. You have access to your house. You place of employment, your family of origin, the community you live in, the organizations to which you belong… these are all places where you have access. There is no mistake that God has permitted you access to where you are and if you are going to make a difference you will have to take advantage of that access. Ebed-melech

had access to the king. The Bible says in verse 7 that this servant was in the king's house. He came out of the king's house to speak with the king. Similarly, Queen Esther had been granted access to the King. She was in essence in the court of waiting. Her cousin had to remind her of her unique position and the fact that she may have been placed in the kingdom for an opportunity to make a difference. How do you not know that God has not permitted you to be on that job, live in that neighborhood, be a part of that association, for such a time as this. You are where you are by the grace of God and in keeping in line with God's purposes. You are strategically positioned to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord. You are positioned to give somebody Godly advice. You are positioned to offer aid and assistance. Naaman was a commander of the Syrian army, and he was a mighty man of valor and highly honored but the Bible says that Naaman had leprosy. There was a young girl in Naaman's house who was a servant to Naaman's wife. One day she told her mistress, I wish my master would go down to Israel for there is a prophet there who could heal him of leprosy. Naaman goes to the prophet Elisha and is subsequently healed. This great man's life was forever changed because of a little servant girl who God had granted access to a powerful man. All the doctors in Syria couldn't do what she did; all the riches in the kingdom couldn't accomplish what she did, by taking advantage of her access. Look around you. Where God has placed you is where God wants you to make a difference. One person called it to "bloom where you are planted." Ask God to let you see afresh and anew your surroundings. Ask him to show you your surroundings through his eyes, with eyes of compassion, with eyes of love, with eyes of discernment. Take advantage of your unique access. It is no mistake where God has you.

If you are going to make a difference in the lives of others you not only must take advantage of your unique access but you must be willing to be an advocate.

2. Advocate- You must be willing to be an advocate. An advocate is one who pleads for or in behalf of another, a sponsor, a promoter, an intercessor. Verse 7-9 says that Ebed-melech heard about Jeremiahs plight and he spoke to the king to express his knowledge of Jeremiahs plight. Ebed-melech took up the case of Jeremiah not on the basis that he was his friend or associate he just wanted to do the right thing. In fact, Ebed-melech, was an Ethiopian, and not a Jew. He could see the injustice of what was happening to Jeremiah and ignore it like everyone else *or* he could make up in his mind that he is going to advocate for Jeremiah. It is most interesting in the text that it is only the foreigner who comes to his aid. Those that you would expect don't always do what is expected. Gandhi is said to have remarked about the behavior of some believers by saying, "I would have been a Christian if it had not been *for* Christians."

To be an advocate, it may not be for people who you have a natural affinity towards. It may not be for those who look just like you. It may not be for those in your economic circle. You cannot always wait for the person who you think should do something to come along and handle the matter. In the New Testament when Jesus affirms the woman who comes to him and anoints him with oil, he rebukes the disciples. Those who were most close to him did not perform the needed thing. The greatest sign of devotion came from one who understood who he was. When the Good Samaritan sees the man lying on the street, he stops and aids him. But it is he, the Samaritan, that stops and

not the priest or the Levite. The ones with the title and position that would have mandated that they assist a person in need did not stop. The Samaritan recognized who his neighbor truly was.

In order to become an advocate, you may be inconvenienced. Moses probably never planned on living out his later years of his life wandering in a desert land. But Moses agreed to be an advocate for the Children of Israel. He took up their cause. Many times, I have been in places when I heard things that I didn't want to hear and saw things that I would have just as soon not seen. After questioning God as to the reason for permitting me to become aware of these things, God replied that I had been granted access in order to be an advocate. In other words, I was granted access so that I might be an intercessor.

Being an advocate means that you will take up the cause of another, it means that when you get down on your knees and petition your Father, through whom you have been granted access, that you will not just be praying for your four and no more, but you will remember to be an advocate for others. You will bring the cares and concerns of those around you to the King. You will remember those like Jeremiah, who have gotten stuck in the mud. You will recall those you are about to slide under if somebody doesn't help them. You will recall those whose legs are so stuck in the mud that they can't get moving; those whose arms are stuck in a muddy disease, those you are struggling in a mess of mud that has rendered them immobile and in need of assistance. You will remember *and* you will be an advocate to the Father. I am so glad that the bible lets us know that each of us has an advocate with the Father. We are told in Romans that sometimes we might find ourselves in such a mess that we don't even know what to say. Sometimes we will be so weak that we won't even be able to articulate a prayer. But we know that we have an intercessor, the Holy Spirit who will make intercession for us to the Father. It's good to have an advocate with the King. **But having access and committing yourself to being an advocate will only aid in making a difference you further resolve to:**

3. Take Action- Verse 11-13, Ebed-melech- takes the ropes and lifts Jeremiah up out of the miry clay. It is not enough to have access and decide to be an advocate; you must decide to do something. Ebed-melech did something. He went to the king and was granted permission to get the prophet out of the miry clay. The Bible says that Ebed-melech went into the house and got some old rags and worn out clothes and went back to the cistern. The things that others had thrown away and thought of as useless, God was about to use to bring deliverance to the weeping prophet. The things that others had tossed and saw no use for, were about to be used by the master to lift a man out of trouble. Don't worry if you don't have what others might have, don't feel like you can't make a difference because you don't have a huge bankroll or a great position, just use what you have. Take the gifts that God has released into you, and go into action. Step to the plate and go to swinging with what you have. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. God said he chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are.

Notice, that Ebed-melech was thoughtful and caring in his approach. He took the rags and he lowered them down to Jeremiah in the cistern. He didn't throw them down to him. He then instructed Jeremiah to put the clothes and rags under his arm to cushion him as he and the men lifted him up out of the pit. In his action, Ebed-melech showed his compassion. He showed that he didn't look down on the prophet. He was compassionate and caring in his approach. Compassion is the deep feeling of sympathy and sorrow accompanied by a desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause.

In the Mark's gospel in Chapter 2, there is an account of some men bringing their friend to Jesus to be healed. These guys had made up in their minds that they would be advocates for their paralyzed friend. They had a friend who could not move on his own. He would if he could, but he couldn't so he needed somebody to be an advocate for him. They took up his cause. They knew where Jesus was teaching and they set out to take their friend to him. Upon arriving there, they were not able to get to Jesus because of the great number of people. These guys took action. The Bible says that they climbed up on the roof and lowered their friend down on a mat to Jesus. They realized that they had the power to make a difference and they did it, not for themselves but for one who could not do it for himself.

If you are going to make a difference in the lives of others, I would submit to you that you are going to have to take advantage of your places of access, you are going to have to commit to be an advocate and then you are going to take some action. WE are under obligation to love our neighbors as ourselves. No matter what kind of mess they find themselves in, we have to remember, that but for the grace of God, go you and I.

Jesus showed us the greatest example of making a difference. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the greatest advocate. 1John 2:1-2 says that ". . . we have an Advocate the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." He has access to the Father and through His death has freely granted each of us that same access. But that access that we have to the Father didn't come cheap. It took some action. Jesus didn't just live for us, He died for us.

Because he was willing to be an advocate for you and I we have access to salvation.

Because Jesus is an advocate for you and me, I can face today and tomorrow.

Because Jesus granted me access to the Father, I can take my petitions to the throne.

Because Jesus took action on my behalf, I know that I might fall in the mud, but I know that I have an advocate that is coming with some padded ropes to help me up.

If he has to send worn out rags and disheveled clothing, he'll come to lift me.

If you feel like Jeremiah in the muddy hole or if you feel like Ebed-melech, you and I have an advocate today. And because we do, we can make a difference in the lives of others. Maybe you can feed a hungry family, help some child with their homework, babysit for a single parent, give clothing to the less fortunate, or visit the sick. When we

stand before the Father, we want him to say, I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to me.

Inasmuch as you did it unto the least of these you did it unto Me. Then the King will say, come on inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Mt 25: 36-40).

There is the illustration of the three items being placed in hot water; the egg, the carrot and the bag of tea. The carrot went in hard and came out soft and mushy, the egg went in soft and fragile and came out hard and cracked. The tea went in the water and changed the whole color of the water. It flavored the water. It made an impact on the water for the better. It made a difference. **Let's resolve to make a difference in the lives of others. You have the power.**

SERMON #3

What Can Jesus Do For You?

Isaiah 61:1-3

Eulogy Sermon for Ernest Bass Preached on Christmas Eve, 2008

(Example of Sermon with Doctrinal Message)

This scripture passage was written by the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament and later quoted by The Messiah Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus quotes this passage and uses it as the basis of his credentials for the ministry that He had been sent to accomplish on the earth. Jesus wanted his listeners to know that He didn't end on the earth as some mistake, - but that He was sent to the world on a day like today to accomplish some specific things.

The truth of the matter is each of us, likewise has been sent to the world to accomplish some specific things. Theses "things" are called our purpose. Some of us spend our entire lives in search of this elusive purpose only to finally stumble upon it late in life. Others seem to know and walk in their purposes right away, while truthfully, some of us never discover what it was that we were really sent here to do.

I believe that Ernest knew something about purpose. From the stories that I have been told, I know that he was a man who was loving and caring. It is important to note that love is an action word, and Ernest showed his love through his presence. He was a father who did what was necessary to take care of the family. Through hospital trips and doctor visits, he managed to keep it all together. When it might have been easier to give up – he didn't. In the book of Ecclesiastes, there is a passage that says, "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth. –better is the end of a thing than the beginning"- At birth we are filled with possibilities, but it is only in death that we can truly note and celebrate all of life's accomplishments. What this passage teaches us is that when a person dies, it is a chance for us to look back and see what they have accomplished in life. It is a chance to look back and celebrate the lives they have touched, it is a chance to note the way their lives have intersected with our lives and give thanks for their having been here with us.

Take for instance the birth of Christ. The angels announced his birth on a hillside. Stars shone in the sky to guide the wise men to his side. The birth of Christ was the fulfillment of God's great love and care for his people. Such a great event was this that some 2000 years later, we still pause to recognize and celebrate this birth. The birth of Christ held great potential for the world. The birth of Christ ushered in a great opportunity for change in the life of mankind. But it was at the death of Christ when the life of Christ took on so

much meaning. It was at the death of Christ, when in thoughtful reflection, that it was realized that because He lived, and because He died, we all now have a right to the tree of life.

In the scripture passage read today, the prophet Isaiah prophesies as to what Jesus was going to do when he was born. But now, we can look back and tell you what Jesus did – what Jesus accomplished through his living and dying. And most importantly today, What can Jesus do for you on a day like today?

What can Jesus do for you?

1. Jesus Can Heal the brokenhearted- He promises to comfort and console those who mourn- Jesus promises to provide us relief in times of sadness. It is normal to cry and mourn at times like this. It is natural and expected. It is a part of the grieving and healing process. God wants you to know that now is the time to pray and ask God to come in and soothe you, because a part of his purpose for coming was to bring you comfort. God provides healing through his word, through prayers, through songs, through others.

2. Jesus Can Proclaim liberty to those who are bound- Proclaiming liberty is simply to say- "you are free to go." A part of the ministry of Jesus was setting people free from things that held them captive. Whether bound in drugs, alcohol, sin, depression- Jesus can set you free today. Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus kept on setting people free. He freed a woman caught in adultery, he freed a man who was demon possessed, he freed those who were rich; he freed those who were poor. There are some testimonies in here today, of those who He freed from some things- and the truth of the matter is – Jesus is still saying- "you are free to go." Come to me all who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. You are free to go- all who think you might be stuck- you are free to go- Free to go on from here and live your lives.

3. Jesus Can Bring you Good news. – Who doesn't like to receive good news? The news that Jesus brings is that he was born on a day that we celebrate as Christmas. The news is that he <u>was</u> Born in Bethlehem - Yes he was away in a manger, no crib for a bed- Yes He lived- He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears. Yes, He raised the dead back to life and walked on water. He calmed the storms in the world and He calmed the storms in the lives of many. Yes, he did all these things- but it was his death that actually turned it all into the good news. The good news is that he provides salvation for everyone, because of his coming AND his dying. He provides a way for me to fulfill my purpose because he lived, he died and he rose again. The good news is that I don't have to live like I've always lived, that is good news. Yes, salvation is available to everyone who will accept it- that is good news. Yes if I live my life in Christ- I can die and live again- that's good news. Joy to the world the Lord has come- that's good news.

In the next few days and months, I pray that you take the time to quietly reflect on the life of Brother Ernest and the impact that his life has had on you. I pray that as we celebrate and recognize the birth of Jesus on tomorrow that you likewise will reflect on

the life of Christ and how his living and dying can impact and should impact each of our lives.

> What can Jesus do for you? There is a song that says,
> Because he lives, I can face tomorrow.
> Because he lives, all fear is gone,
> Because I know who holds the future
> Life is worth living- because he lives.
> Life is better, because Ernest came this way.
> Life is better because Jesus is still coming our way.
> And because he lives, I can face tomorrow.

SERMON #4

Prophetic Sermon

Answer the Knock

Acts 12: 1-19

The text opens with a scene that lets us know that this is a season of persecution for this upstart church. Only ten chapters before, the apostles had received the ruach – the breath of God and the power of the Holy Ghost that they needed to go forth and witness. Now as a result of their going, as a result of their witnessing, as a result of them doing what the Lord had directed, this same band of Jesus followers find themselves facing *authorized persecution.*

It was *authorized persecution* because it was government sanctioned persecution. It was the government, led by King Herod that demanded that they not preach in the name of Jesus. It was the government that said we will lock you up and kill you dead if we have to in order to put a stop to this Jesus talk. It was the government that said, you can pray in the public assembly—Just don't call on the name of Jesus. It was the government that said there would not be any authorized praying in schools. The text says that because it pleased the people, King Herod continued with the authorized persecution. After Herod had killed James, he took Peter into prison also. A large crowd of people was in town because it was the Passover and Herod made sure to do what would please the crowds. Because *the people* who made campaign contributions were pleased, and the people who sat on the right boards and the people who hired the loudest lobbyist were pleased, the text says Herod proceeded further.

Verse Five tells us that Peter was kept in prison. Peter was in prison, **but**- prayer was made without ceasing by the church for him. Peter's ministry was on lock down- but the church was interceding for him. Everything that God had purposed in Peter was now in chains, but the church response was to pray fervently to God.

There will be times in our lives when the purposes for which we have been created seem to be pushed out of sight and bound, but we've must remember to pray fervently to God.

When the finances seem to be chained but - pray fervently to God.
When the loan seems to be on lock down- but pray fervently to God.
When your child's mind seems to be imprisoned by the things of this world, do what the church did, pray fervently to God.
When you get in trouble with the government,
You get in trouble with the officials.
You get in trouble with the people… just for doing what God said do-
I encourage you to let a BUT - rise up in your spirit;
Let a BUT God give you confidence, Let a BUT God give you hope.

The text says that Peter is in prison asleep between two guards He is bound in chains but he is still sleeping comfortably. Peter was sleeping comfortably because he

understood that this was only a temporary situation. He knew that this imprisonment would not keep him from fulfilling his destiny. Peter had received a word from Jesus as recorded in John 21:18 that he would be an old man one day. This one word gave Peter the assurance that he needed to know that he would not die in this episode. One of my favorite TV shows is "24." The premise of this show is that one season represents the span of one 24 hour period, with each show representing one hour of the day. When The main character in this show is Jack Bauer. Jack has a habit of getting himself into all kinds of difficult situations, such as in dungeons, being held at gun or knife point. But despite the most complexity of the situation Jack may find himself in, I watch this show with a level of relaxation. I am relaxed because I realize that the season won't end until Hour #24. I know that though the situation looks impossible, Jack will come out of this unscathed because Jack is scheduled to appear in next week's episode. No matter how bad it looks or how dangerous the situations, the words of the script have already been written and Jack Bauer will come out of this somehow. Peter slept with assurance and when we find ourselves in difficult times and seasons, may we have assurance as well. Remember the Word, the promises that God has given you and remember the destiny that is on your life. It might look bad, but this won't take you out, because you've got an appearance in next week's episode.

While Peter slept, the angel comes in and rescues Peter from the prison cell, and delivers him safely on the outside of the jail. When Peter realizes that this has not been a dream, h goes to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark. It is in Mary's house that the church has gathered for an all night prayer meeting and petitioning God for Peter's release.

Arriving on the scene, Peter knocks at the gate and the text declares that a damsel, a servant, a girl named Rhoda came toward the gate to see who it was. **I believe there are some lessons that can be learned from Rhoda. What does Rhoda's behavior teach us about the church's and the believer's response in times of difficulty and persecution**.

1. <u>Listen for God's Voice</u> Rhoda and the church had gathered together and prayed all night for Peter's release. They knew that the most effective use of their time was to be in unified prayer. And now in the midst of their praying, there comes a knocking. It is interesting to me that the servant girl is the only one who moves at the knock. While I know that it was her lot to move, it seems that with all that praying, there would have been a heightened sense of expectation. But the text says that Rhoda alone, upon hearing the knocking, goes to the door. It is now between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. and the damsel does not open the door. The text says that Peter speaks and Rhoda recognizes his voice. When Rhoda heard the knocking, she had to get up off her knees, and when she listened, she heard and recognized the voice of Peter. The church must continue to gather in prayer and must be postured in a state of expectation. There is a knock coming, in answer to prayer and we must continue to listen to hear God's response.

2. <u>Tell God's Message-</u> After Rhoda heard the voice of Peter, she quickly ran and began to tell the gathered church that Peter was at the door.

God had heard their prayers, answered their prayers and had delivered Peter. And wouldn't you know it, nobody believed poor Reverend Rhoda. The voice of the one they had been seeking now speaks and yet nobody believes it. God shows up and shows out and Rhoda runs to tell the message and the people don't believe it. They do not believe that God did what they asked God to do. They do not believe that God did it in that manner. God wouldn't have Peter show up in the middle of the night. These faithful believers who would stay on their knees all night long in prayer do not recognize the move of God or the message of God when their prayer is answered. But Rhoda persisted and she keeps telling them anyhow. She insisted and declared that it was Peter at the door. She continued to speak and refused to be quieted. May we be like Rhoda, and keep on telling the message, no matter who believes? When even the church won't receive the message, keep telling the message anyway. We must preach the good news.

3. <u>Move at God's Direction</u>- Rhoda was so excited when she heard the voice of Peter, that the text says she did not open the door. Remember, Peter is an escaped prisoner, standing outside in the open in the middle of the night. It was really not a wise thing to keep him outside knocking for a lengthy time. In Rhoda's excitement, she failed to open the door. Joy over the Word is good, dancing and shouting is a great expression of joy, but you've got to open up the door. Rhoda's praying was necessary, Rhoda's joy was good, telling the message was imperative, but Rhoda forgot to open the door and let Peter in. She needed to answer the knock. She prayed for a knock, she shouted over the knock, she even announced the knock, but she didn't answer the knock. Answering the knock would mean opening the door. The work is not complete until we move on what we've heard God say. We pray for an opportunity, we hear of the opportunity, we tell everybody else about it and then we fail to take advantage of it ourselves.

Nike has a slogan that says, "Just do it."

In times of difficulty and distress, keep on praying, keep on declaring, but then do what the Lord directs.

Don't leave the knock unanswered. Don't leave your answer standing at the door. You must see the job through to completion. You must move forward and do all that God has ordained. Your praying has not been in vain, your preaching has not been in vain. There is a knock a coming be sure to open up the door. Even if the knock comes when you don't expect it or the knock comes in the middle of the night, get up and open the door. Your blessing, your answer to prayer is standing at the door. Open the door and let it in.

One time Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane – praying all night long, when the knock came.

The knock came in the form of Roman soldiers. But I am so glad, that Jesus answered that knock. The knock led to a jail cell, the jail cell led to a kangaroo court, the kangaroo court led to a rugged cross and the rugged cross led to a borrowed tomb. That borrowed tomb led to a glorious resurrection! But I'm so glad today, that his resurrection led to a new life for you and for me. Keep praying, keep preaching, I hear a knock a coming.

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